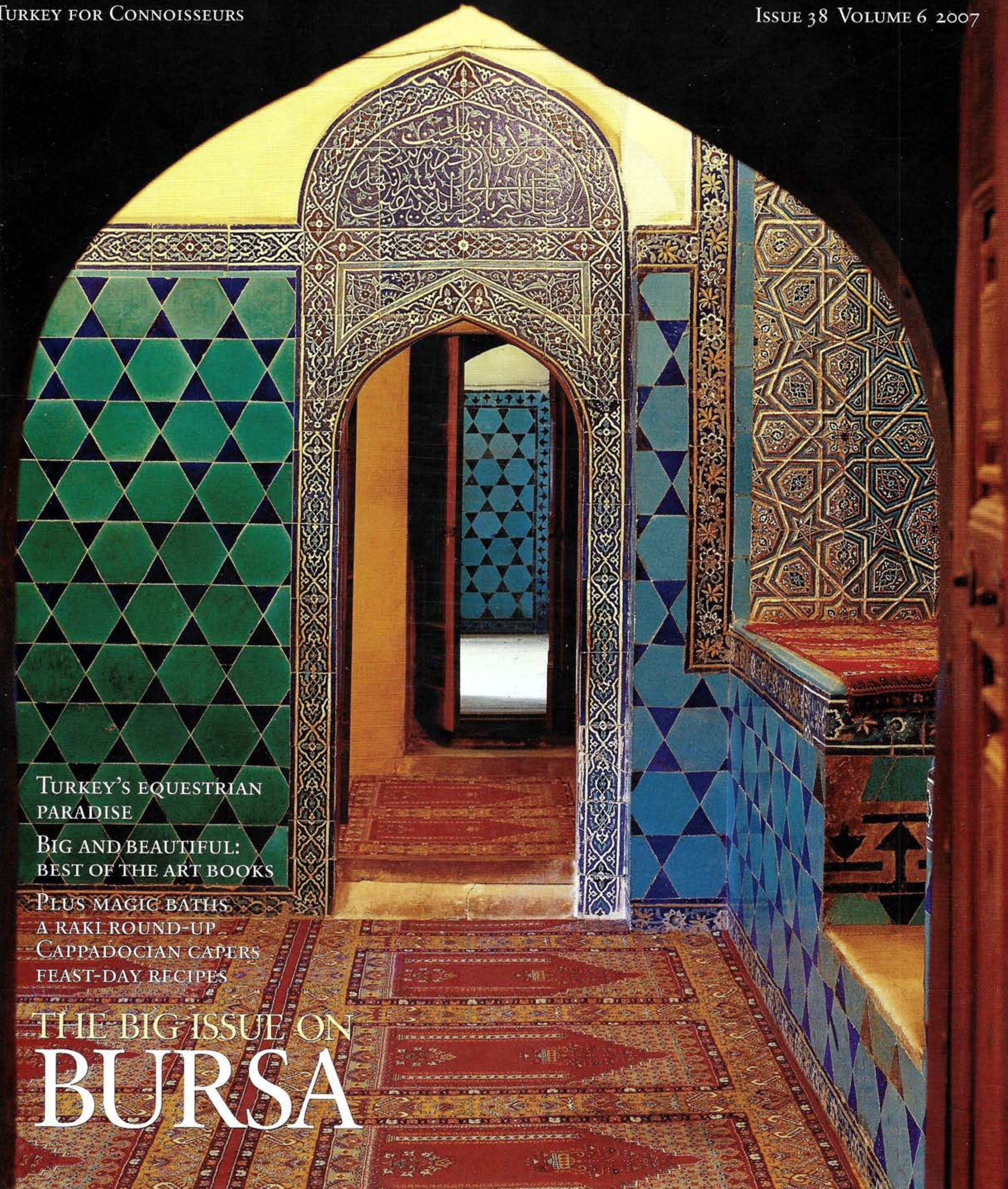
CORNUCOPIA

Turkey for Connoisseurs

Issue 38 Volume 6 2007



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feast-day recipes

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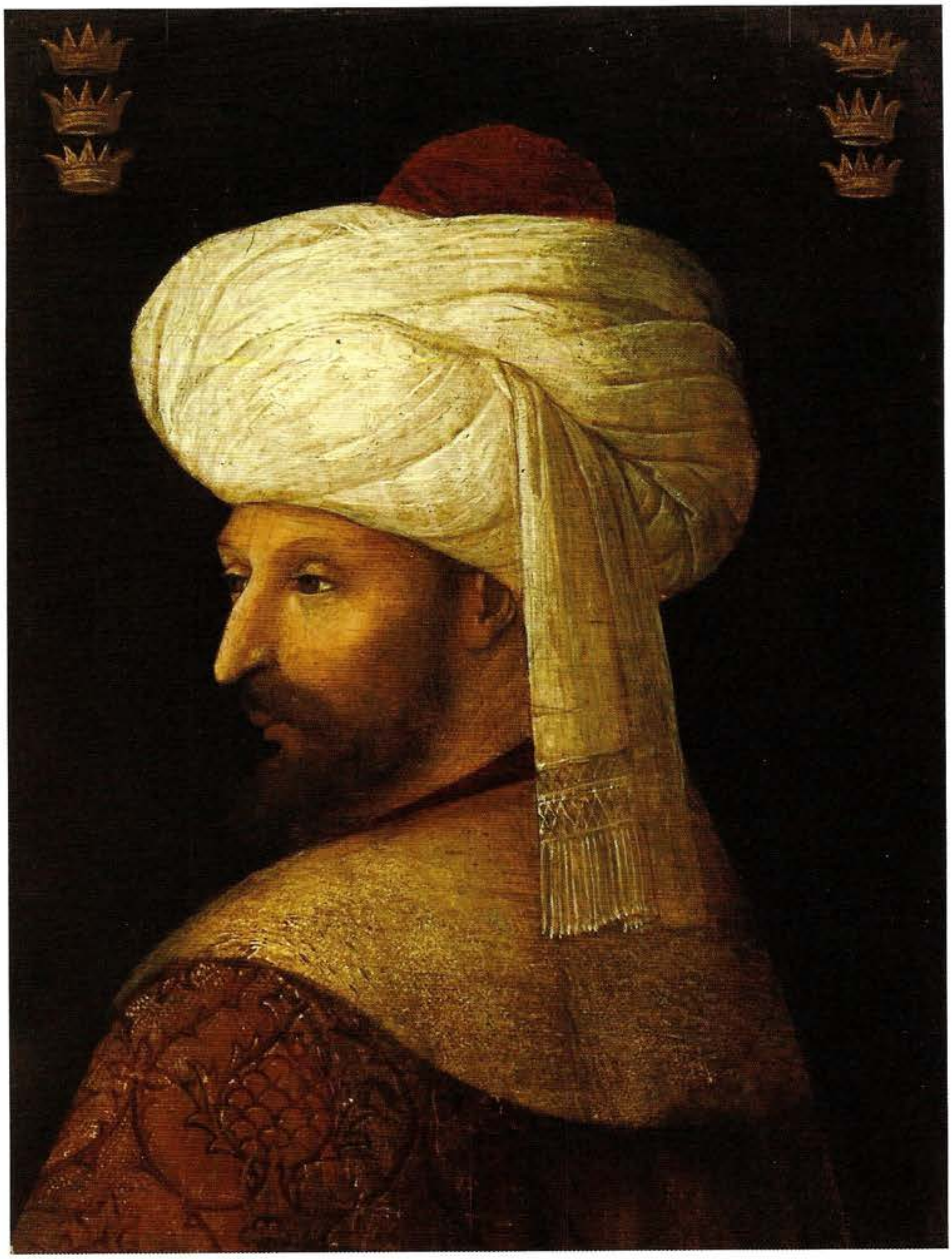

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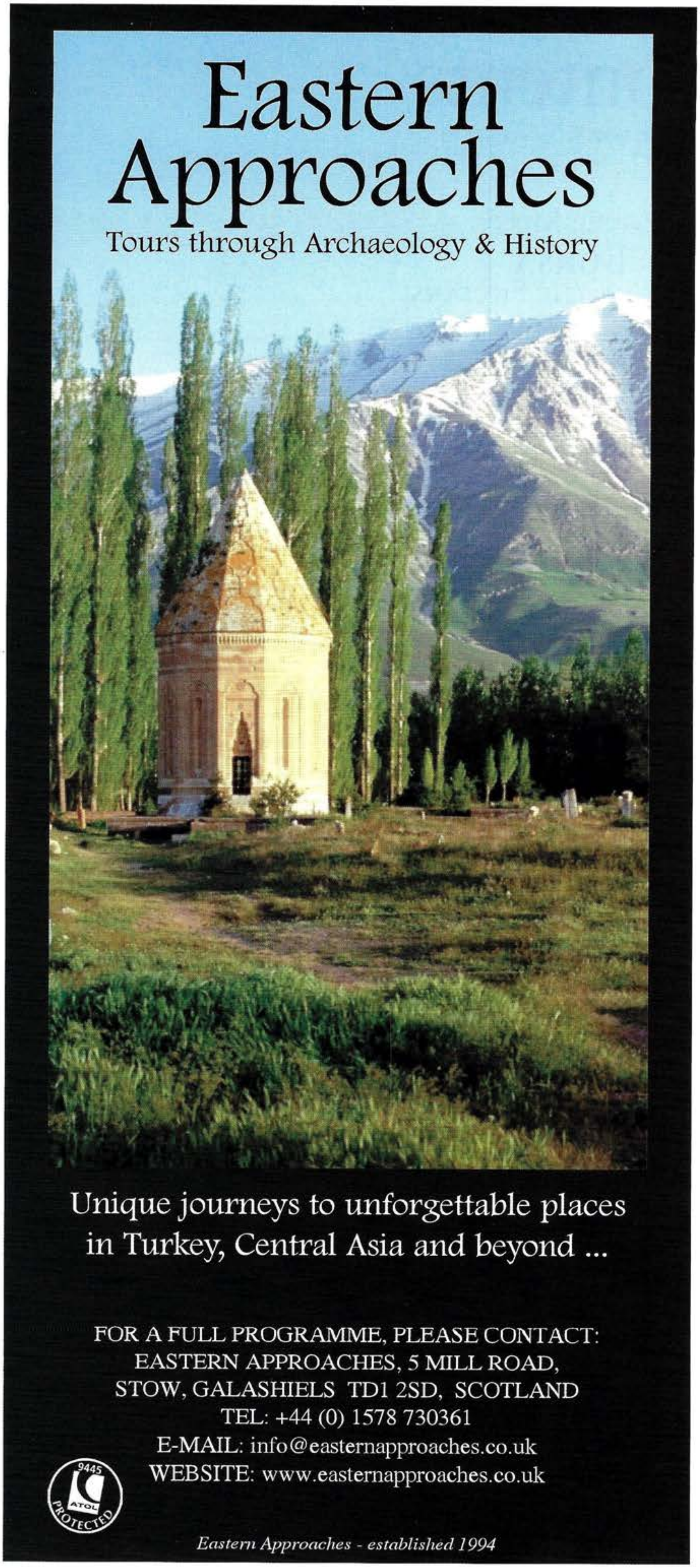

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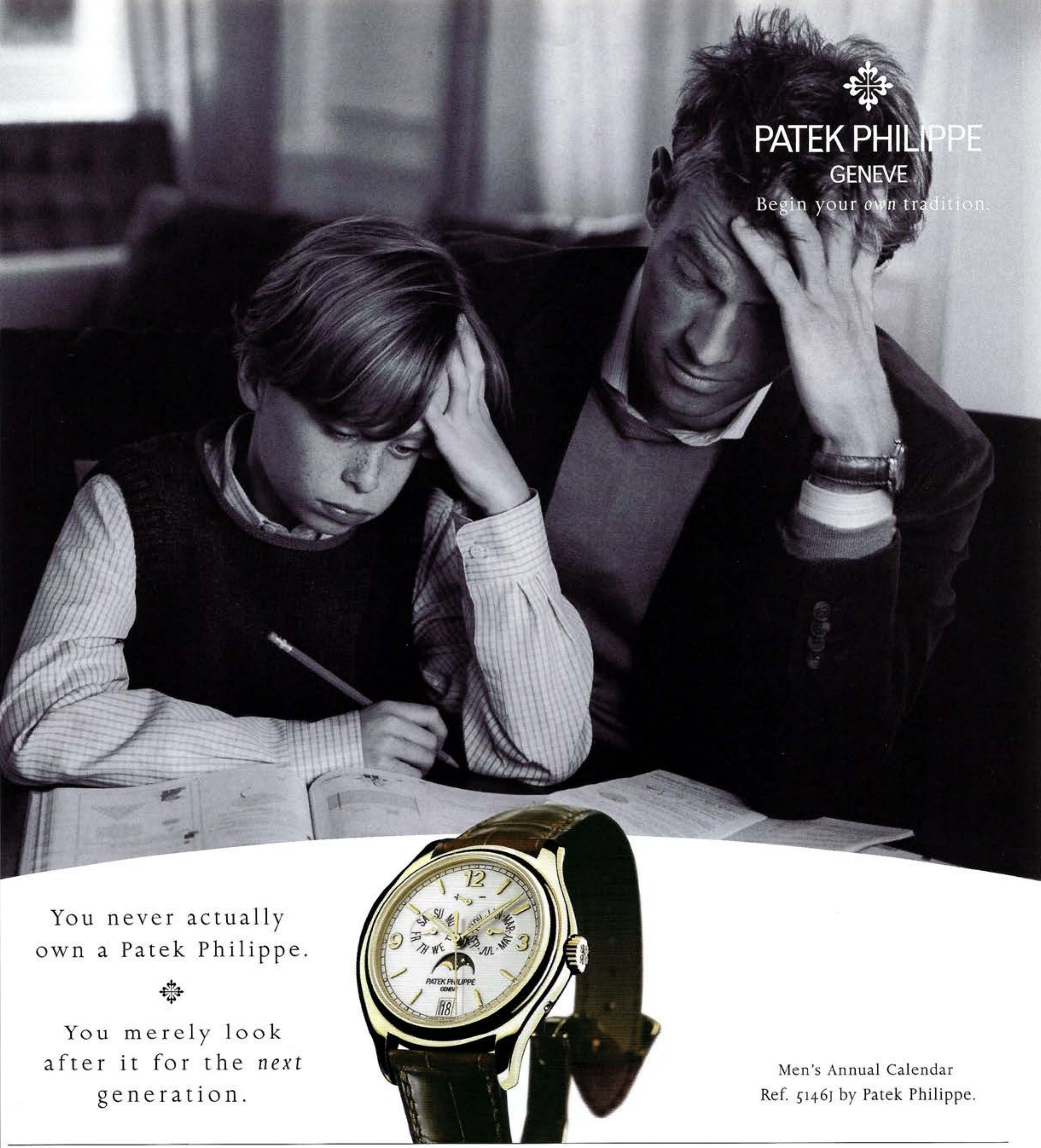
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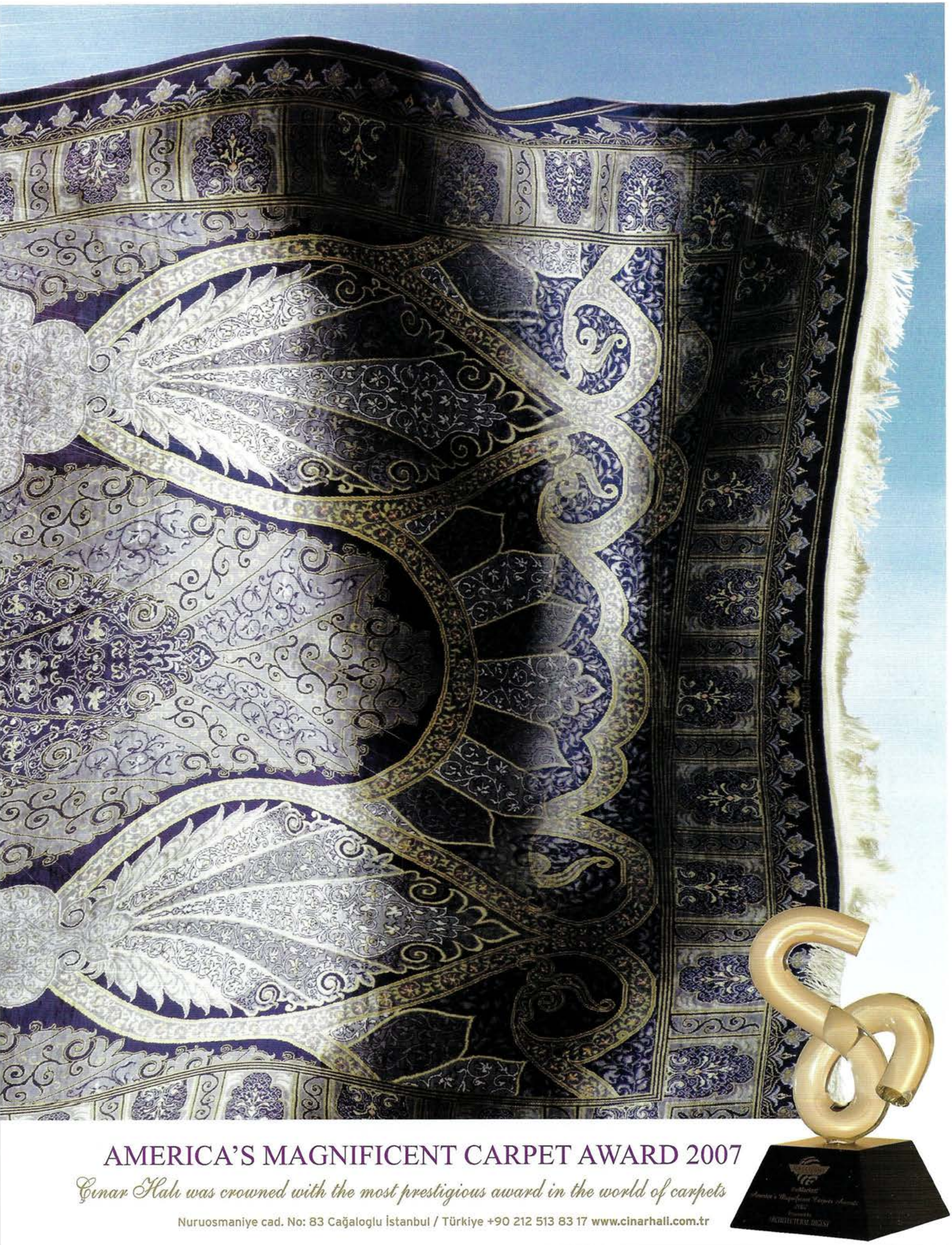

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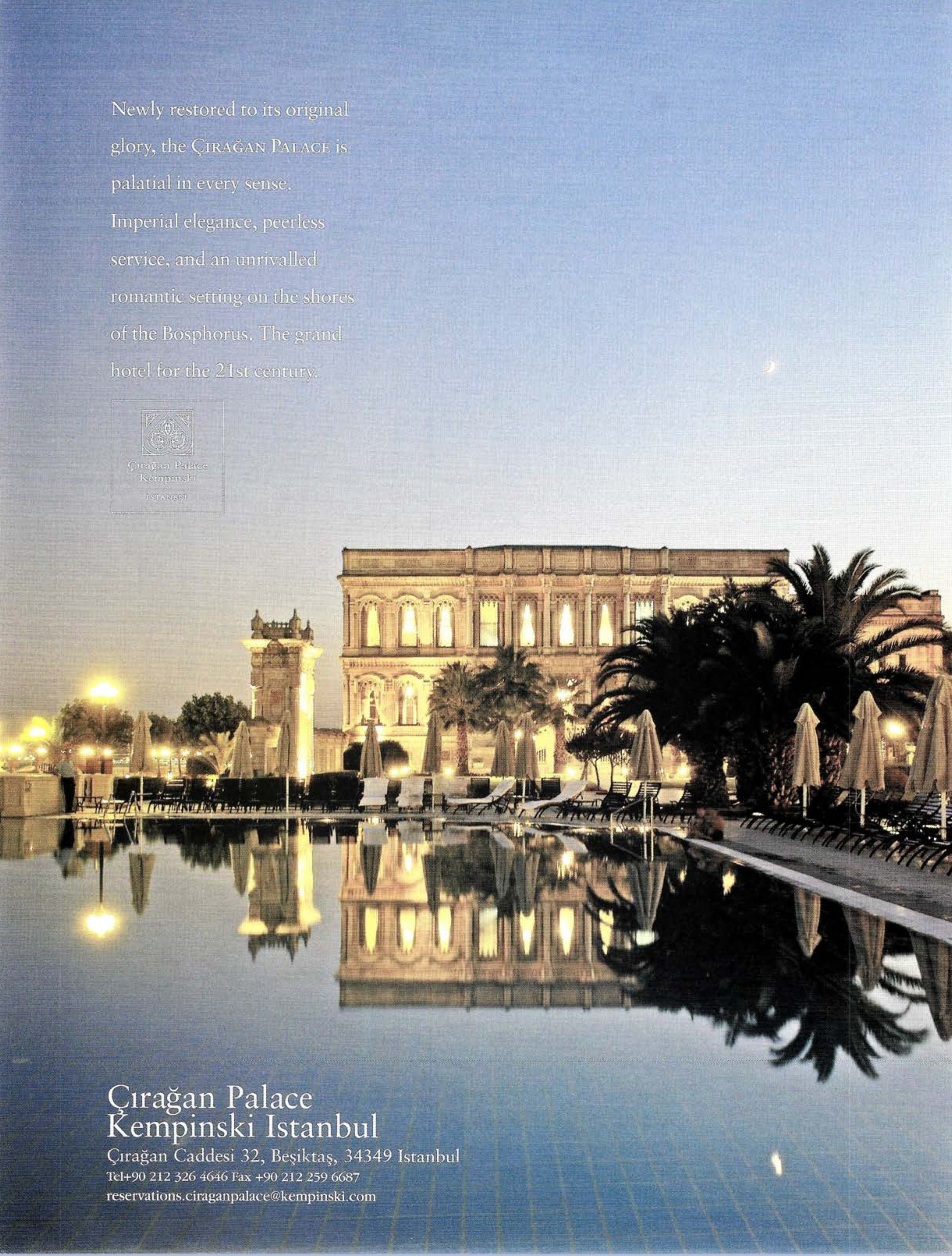

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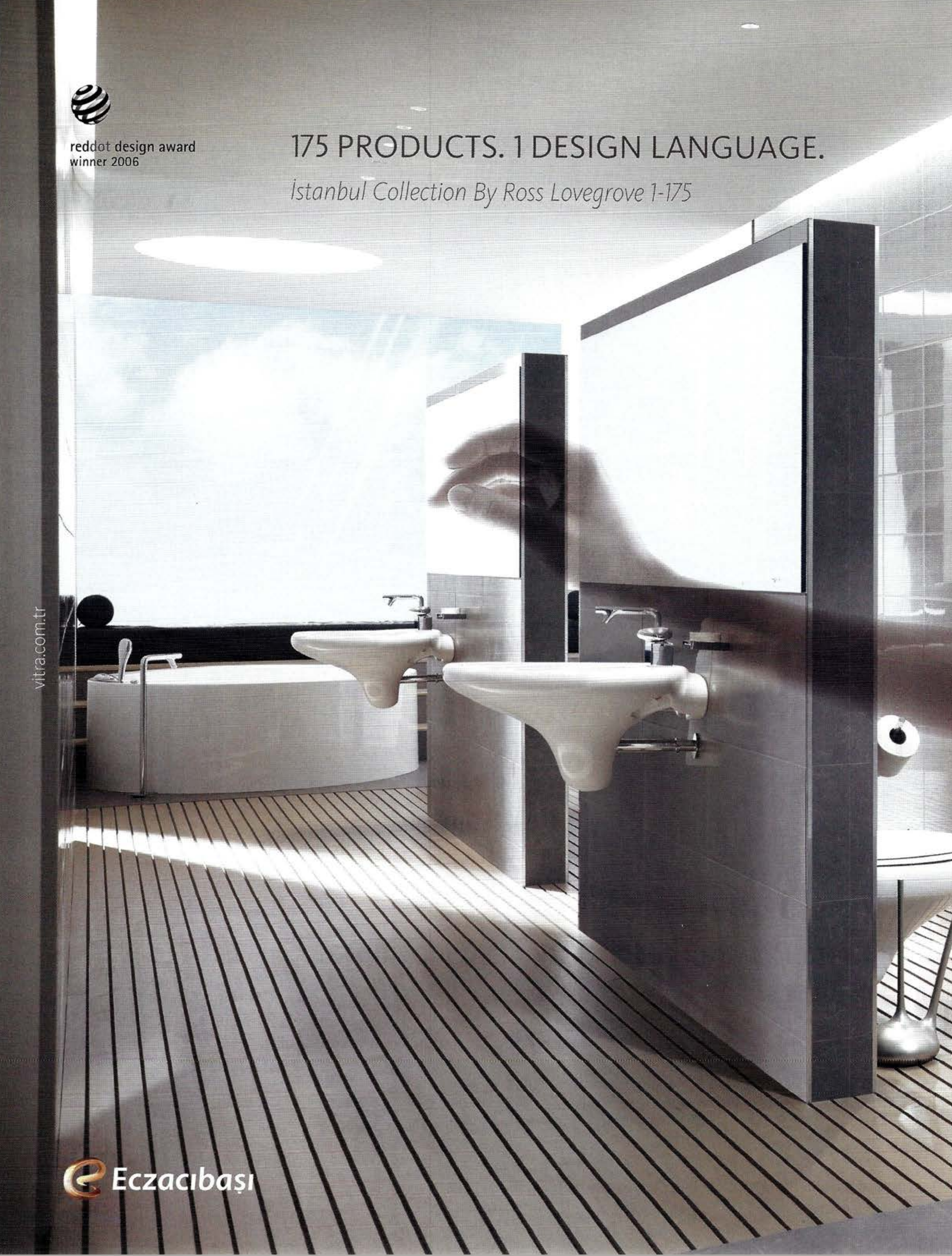
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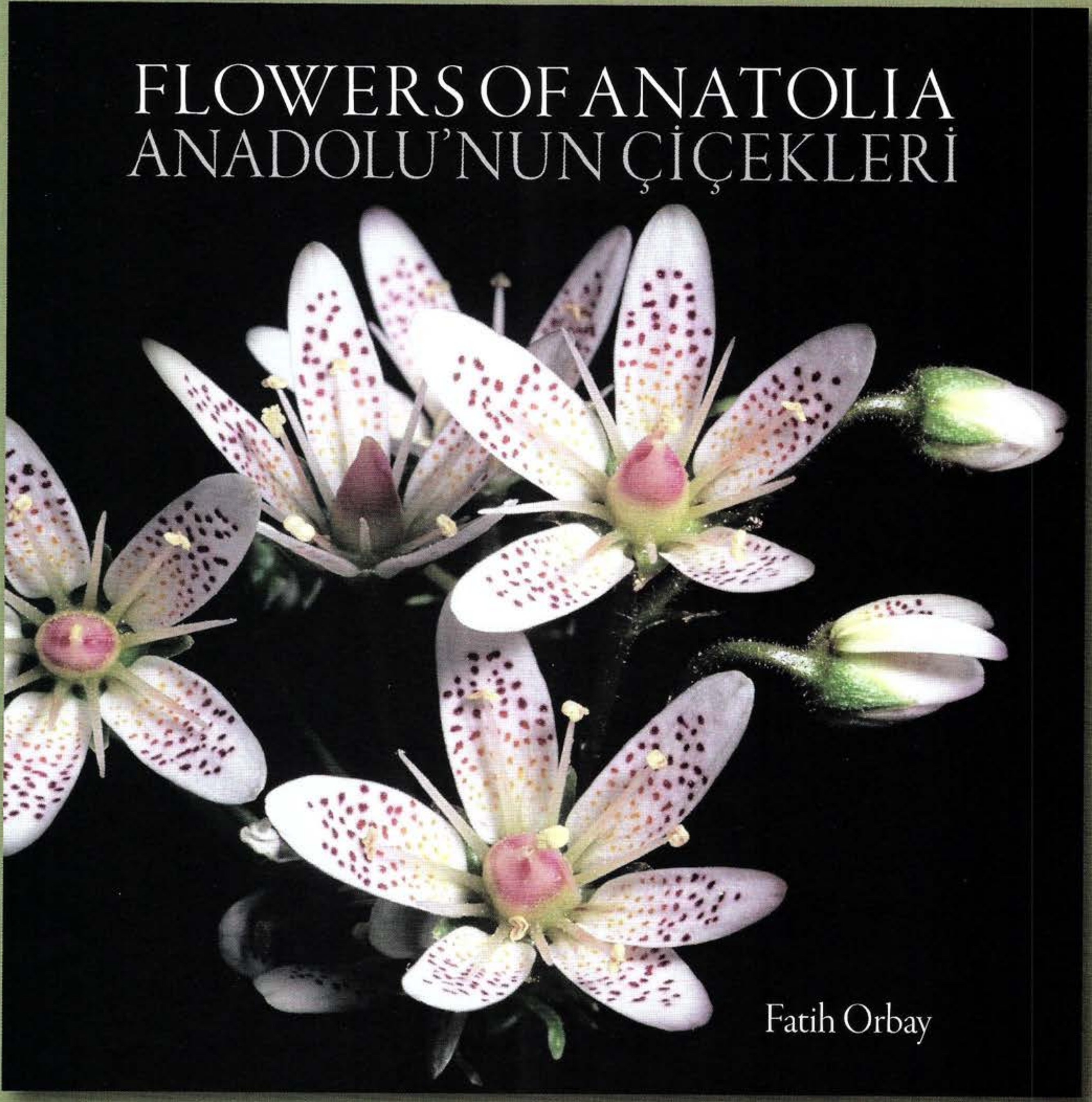
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Private view

Andrew Finkel looks back over a long and heated political
summer, assesses Izmir's bid to host Expo 2015,
and wonders why today's Turkish politicians can't take a joke

Politics: the heat is on

"It's the future of the Republic, stupid!" is one thing Bill Clinton never said. Yet many pundits were convinced it wasn't so much the economy that concerned voters during Turkey's hot and politically gruelling summer, but the entire nature of the regime. "The battle for Turkey's soul", was how more than one publication described the July 22 general election – although what was at stake, and who represented God and who the Devil, was often left vague. Did the contest pit Islamists against secularists, democrats against autocrats, pro-Europeans against old-style nationalists, globalisers against protectionists, a new versus an old elite, civil society against the military/bureaucratic guardians of the state – all or none of the above?

On the surface, at least, Turks went to the poll a few months ahead of schedule for the simple reason that parliament was unable to carry out its constitutional obligation to elect a new president. Many members of the establishment, and that includes the military, were not upset that the government's choice for the job, foreign minister Abdullah Gül, was stymied, not by a lack of a majority in parliament, but by a legal technicality.

They organised massive demonstrations in major cities throughout Turkey to protest at what they described as the ruling Justice and Development (AK) party's agenda to subvert their way of life. Yet there were others who suspect that this old guard was less afraid of an AK party that harboured secret Islamist designs than one that didn't. What terrifies the old guard most is that AK has become the natural party of government, has defined the middle ground, and will ultimately commit to European values. At the July election AK judiciously sifted the candidate lists – getting rid of some of the old hard line, adding more (uncovered) women, and recruiting a few prominent left-of-centre members of other parties. The throngs of supporters at their electoral rallies were an answer to the pro-secular gatherings of the months before.

Perhaps one of the most significant events in the run-up to the election campaign was the initial public offering for 25 per cent of the publicly owned Halkbank. It fetched $1.85 billion, was seven times oversubscribed and finished trading the next day at an 11 per cent premium. This seemed to put paid to the dire warnings that Turkey was in crisis. The military were not immune to this bullish mood. Just a month before the poll, the military pension fund, OYAK, negotiated the sale of its bank to the Dutch giant ING for $2.7 billion. They appeared to have caught the bug reported in a *Financial Times* article on the Istanbul business elite, who couldn't quite bring themselves to vote for the AK party, but hoped they wouldn't lose.

That certainly didn't happen. Whether the electorate was focused on the economy or the lifestyle or the stability of the regime, there was little doubt about the result. The AK party won nearly 47 per cent of the vote, a massive figure by Turkish standards. It became the first government to win re-election in twenty years and the first to increase its vote (up from 34 per cent) since 1954. Parliament finally managed, on August 28, to elect Abdullah Gül as its new president.

Ankara will continue to knock on the door of the EU. And how will Europe respond? They may find dealing with a confident Turkey more challenging than facing one at war with itself.

Izmir's bid for glory

When Istanbul bid for the 2000 Olympic Games, I cheered from the sideline. The argument that convinced me most was that planning for the site would mean planning for the future of a city which was then sprawling westwards in an undisciplined sort of way. When it applied for the 2004 Games, I was there trying to pull my weight. When it tried again for 2008, I began to suspect that the city was more enthusiastic about bidding than it was about winning. In retrospect, it was probably a good thing that Istanbul failed to take on the financial commitment of building baseball stadiums and other expensive showcases with a lifespan of a mere two weeks.

So I speak with the zeal of the recently unconverted to endorse another Turkish city's bid to host an international event. Izmir is hoping to stage a world's fair, Expo 2015. This is a vast undertaking and one that will leave its mark. The great "universal exhibitions" have always had as profound an effect on their host as on the crowds they draw – in this case an estimated 16 million visitors, about a quarter from abroad. It was the Paris Exposition in 1867 that even lured an Ottoman sultan into embarking on an official visit abroad, and it is time the compliment was repaid.

Izmir has taken as its brief: "Health for All: New Routes to a Better World." It is a theme that encompasses the great issues of our times, from social justice (why is life expectancy in Sierra Leone forty-one years and twice that in Japan?) to the environment. But will it win? The chances are a great deal better than Istanbul's was for the Olympics. For a start, there is only one other competitor, Milan.

I had the chance to take a straw poll among foreign delegates from the International Exhibitions Bureau (BIE), who will decide the outcome, when they visited the city. The only thing I can say for certain is that the vote promises to be close. Milan represents the safe choice, but many of the delegates thought that even if Izmir wasn't going to win, it deserved to do so – that the Expo will mean more to a fast-changing regional centre than to a bastion of "old Europe". This means that Izmir has done quite a good job, quickly, of winning hearts and minds.

How many politicians does it take?

There is a tradition of Turkish political humour. Consider the case of Nasreddin Hodja, the great Anatolian fool, who was bad-mouthing the all-powerful Tamerlane to a perfect stranger. "Do you know who I am?" the stranger asked. The Hodja shook his head. "No? I am Tamerlane," the man replied. "Ah. But do you know who *I* am?" the Hodja asked. And when Tamerlane shook his head, the Hodja replied: "Good." And ran for the hills.

Fast-forward to today. Turkey is governed by a political party with a light-bulb as its party logo, but how many Turkish light-bulb jokes do you know? Or shaggy-dog stories about Atatürk? All nations mock their leaders, but somehow Turkish politicians believe dignity must be preserved at any cost. Even the reputedly humourless Germans were notorious for making fun of the pear-shaped Helmut Kohl ("There was an unexpected power-cut in Bonn just as the chancellor was descending to the lobby, and he was stuck for three hours – in the escalator"). To be fair, many Turks schooled in the German tradition tried to do the same to Yıldırım Akbulut, the prime minister, who was widely seen as a rubber stamp way back when Turgut Özal became president.

Some of the jokes were even borrowed from the Germans (Akbulut goes to the theatre to buy two tickets. "For Romeo and Juliet?" "No, for myself and my wife"). However, the best Akbulut joke I know was not at his expense. "What do you think of these Akbulut jokes," a reporter actually asked the prime minister. "Why don't you tell me one," he replied.

Displaying a sense of humour is not what today's government does best. The prime minister once actually sued a cartoonist who depicted him as a cat caught up in a ball of wool. He has lightened up a little bit since, so he might take some comfort from the fact that while there are not many jokes at Atatürk's expense, there is at least one.

Atatürk's *hodja* was the waiter who collected the complicated orders for Turkish coffee. One night, the waiter walked the length of the enormous table, listening to each guest's preference for this much sugar or that much sugar or no sugar at all, seeming so confident of his memory that he never bothered to write anything down. Eventually he reappeared, handing out the cups. Mustafa Kemal sipped his coffee and, to his amazement, it was sweet, just the way he'd asked. "How on earth did you manage to get the orders straight?" he asked the waiter. "I remembered yours," the man replied. "Who cares about the rest." ◆

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CONNOISSEUR'S CHOICE

CORNUCOPIA'S CONTRIBUTORS SELECT THE CREAM OF TURKEY'S ART BOOKS

What is a Turk?

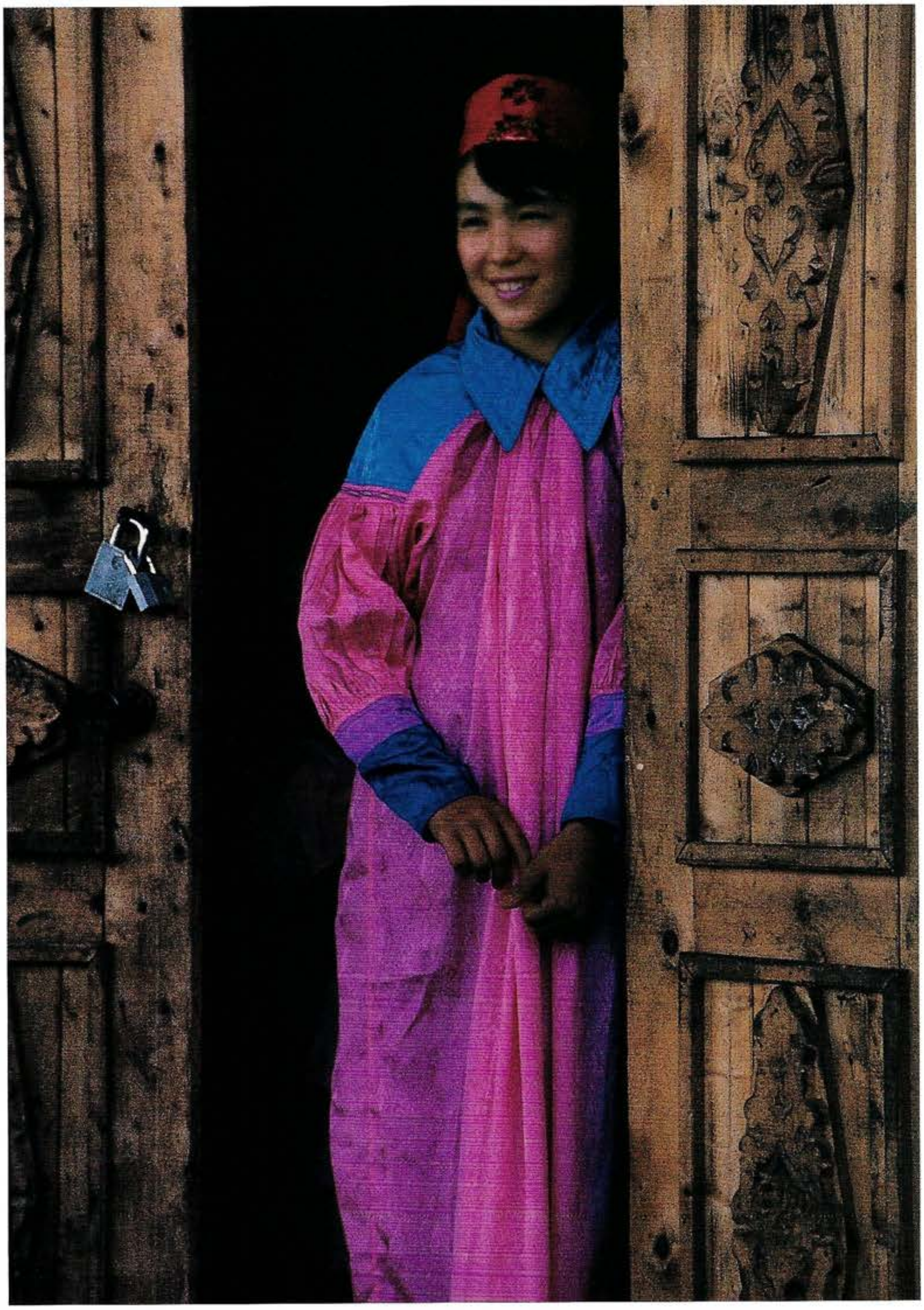
BY CHRISTIAN TYLER

The Turkic Speaking Peoples: 2,000 Years of Art and Culture from Inner Asia to the Balkans Edited by Ergun Çağatay and Doğan Kuban Photographs by Ergun Çağatay, Prestel with The Prince Claus Fund Library, 496pp, 277 colour illustrations, £55

Mustafa Kemal, father of modern Turkey, was invited to a reception at the German embassy, where he congratulated the excavator of the Hittite capital of Boğazköy on recovering the remains of his people's ancestors. The German archaeologist was just about to protest when a kick from his ambassador changed his reply to a simple: "Yes, Your Excellency."

Atatürk was not being naive, writes Richard Frye, author of the anecdote and one of the thirty-four Turkish, Russian and Anglophone scholars who have contributed to this magnificent book. The Hittites were just as surely ancestors of modern Turks as were the Turkic nomads who began moving into Anatolia after the first millennium AD.

What is a Turk? The title of this tome (it weighs nearly



VIVID IMAGES OF THE TURKIC WORLD. RIGHT: A CHRISTIAN KHAKASSIAN GIRL IN AHAKAN, RUSSIA, WHERE THE TURKISH SPOKEN IS CLOSELY RELATED TO UIGHUR. FOLLOWING PAGES: A GAME OF BOSKASHI (LITERALLY GOAT-GRABBING) IN UZBEKISTAN

three kilos) has been carefully chosen. For its central hypothesis is that the question cannot be answered except with propagandist falsehoods, and is therefore largely useless. As a contributor notes, the name "Türk" itself appeared only in the sixth century AD, and then in Chinese documents.

Turkish nationalism – the idea that there is a pure ethnic type or a pure Turkish language – is an even more recent invention: the ideology developed in the nineteenth century and the claim to a territorial empire ("pan-Turkism") only in the twentieth. Ergun Çağatay, the *Time/Life* photographer whose marvellous pictures engendered this project, became convinced after ten years spent travelling in Central Asia that the adjective "Turkic" was not only synthetic, but actually divisive. Nationalist zeal already had a sour taste for him: he had spent months in hospital with severe burns after being caught in an Armenian terrorist attack at Orly airport in July 1983.

Yet there are 135 million people who speak a Turkic language. What is so striking – almost as if to confound the multi-ethnic thesis – is the unity of those languages, and the similarity of the peoples' character and customs in spite of the enormous distances which separate them, from Yakutia in eastern Siberia to the Balkans and the Gulf, to Frankfurt and London's Finsbury Park.

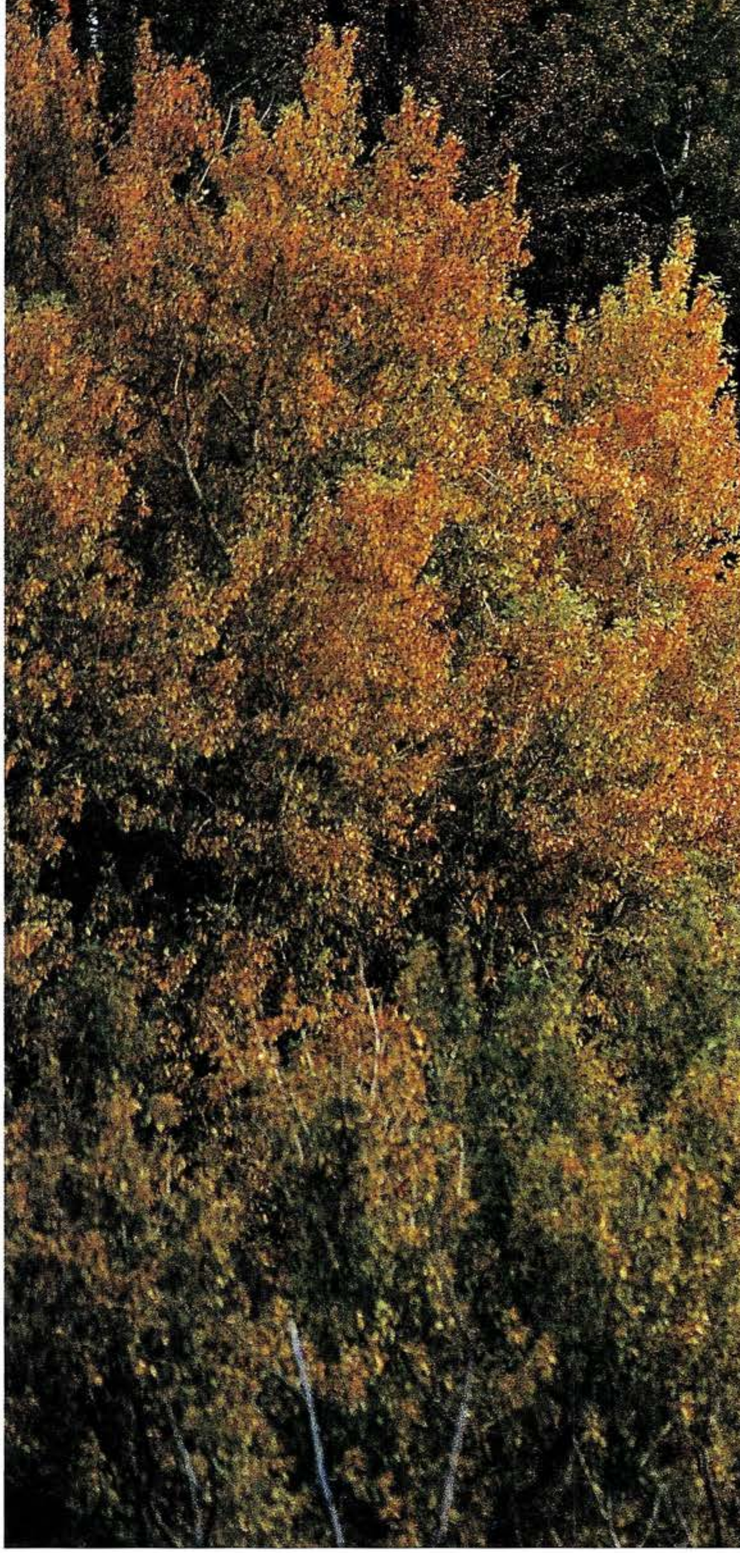
The scholar Talat Tekin identifies a dozen Turkic linguistic groups, most of them mutually intelligible to a high degree. Only four – Chuvash, Yakut, Tuva and Khakas – are mutually incomprehensible. Co-editor Doğan Kuban observes that the Turkish word "bir" ("one"), is the same from Turfan to Istanbul, while Western Europe has many variants: "one", "ein" and "un". There are common character traits, too, says Çağatay, possibly derived from a common nomadic past: Turkic speakers tend to be reserved, suspicious, quick to anger, but resilient. Even their body language is similar. They also share, even in Muslim communities, a respect for the equality of women.

Mention of Islam reminds us that most Turkic speakers are Sunni Muslims. Yet there are shamanists too, Buddhists, Christians and even – in the Karaim of Lithuania – Jews. Religion can cut both ways. Where Islam enjoys political power, it can become regressive and intolerant; but where it does not, it helps preserve the people's cultural identity (rather as Catholicism did in Soviet-controlled Poland).

This book, then, is a supranational history of symbiotic relationships, cultural mergers and collisions created by nomadic Turks who emerged from the Siberian-Mongolian borders and were, in the words of one writer, "probably the most dynamic agents of world history". It describes the mutual impact on the Chinese, Persians, Slavs, Arabs and Greek Byzantines. A separate chapter is devoted to the Turco-Mongol connection (we are reminded that the Moghul emperors of India were actually Turks); and two chapters relate the fascinating story of the Tatars and the Volga Bulgars before and after their defeat in 1552 by Ivan the Terrible.

If it is proper to see the Turks as an unavoidably hyphenated people, like Afro-Americans or Anglo-Indians, it is simpler to understand them in two broad categories – nomad or sedentary, mountain people or valley dwellers – rather than struggle with the myriad names they have used over time. Naming and classifying can have paradoxical consequences. The Soviets' artificial division of Central Asians into five "nationalities" created animosity between them after the fall of the USSR. The same has happened in western China.

This book is not all hard work. There are some delightful excursions. Chapters on cuisine, for instance, prove that the view from the kitchen is historically very helpful. (We learn also that the infant Genghis Khan was reared on wild fruit, wild onions and lily-root porridge, and there are



AN ISOLATED YURT (OR GER) IN A FOREST CLEARING IN TUVA, SOUTHERN SIBERIA, WHERE SHAMANISM STILL FLOURISHES

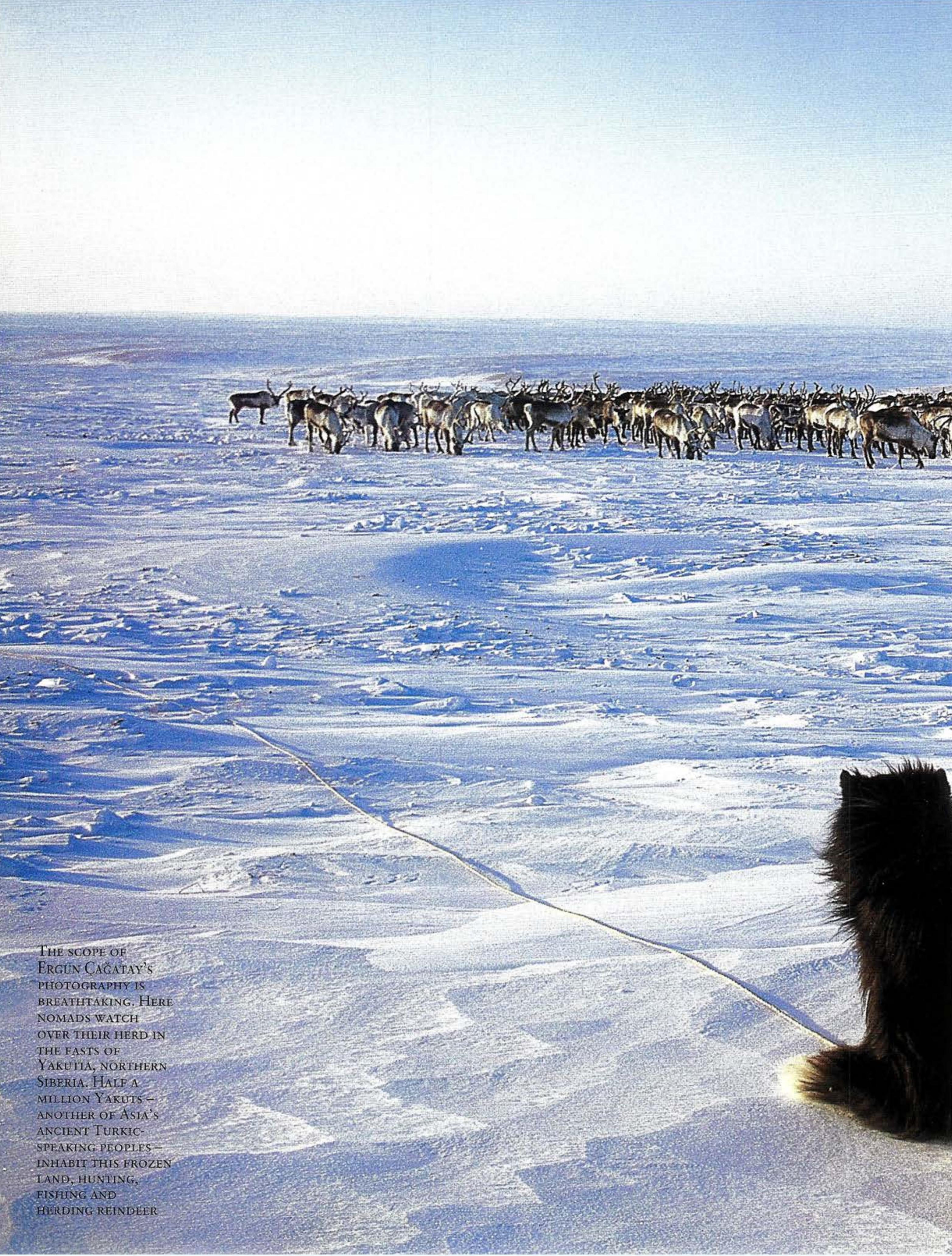
recipes, including one for "Noah's Pudding"). Other subjects covered include epic poetry, the Kazakh yurt, arts, crafts and architecture. There is not, however, much on music.

The contributors have achieved what the blockbuster exhibition *Turks*, at the Royal Academy in London three years ago – magnificent though it was – could not do. They have traced and explained the cultural loans and debts of the nomadic phenomenon. The scholarly differences between authors are instructive (who were the Magyars? Were the Huns Turks?). And if their contributions sometimes overlap, that is no bad thing in a topic so complex.

As for the pictures, they are a feast for the eye, pages on which the reader can rest from poring over the (rather too small) print of the text. We see not only "ethnic" pictures of Askhabad's desert market or the old game of *boskashi* (a mounted struggle for the carcass of a goat), but stunning shots of people, objects and buildings, some of them since destroyed.

The world depicted here is vanishing, of course. The destruction that totalitarianism began, globalisation unfortunately seems set to continue. But then destruction has always been part of the nomad story. This book should not only excite anyone interested in the history of Eurasia; it should help mobilise support for the preservation of a vibrant non-European culture. ◆

Christian Tyler is the author of *Wild West China: the Taming of Xingjiang* (John Murray)



The scope of Ergün Çağatay's photography is breathtaking. Here nomads watch over their herd in the fasts of Yakutia, northern Siberia. Half a million Yakuts – another of Asia's ancient Turkic-speaking peoples – inhabit this frozen land, hunting, fishing and herding reindeer

As spring arrives in Central Asia, nomads with their flocks and yurts make tracks for greener pastures. Ergun Çağatay's evocataive photograph was taken near Narin in central Kyrgyzstan

Books of the year

Cracks in the wall of time

By Philip Mansel

Souvenir of Istanbul: Photographs from the Yıldız Palace Albums (Yadigâr-ı Istanbul)
By Nurhan Atasoy
Akkök Yayınları, Istanbul
Boxed hardback, 356pp, 268 photographs, YTL180

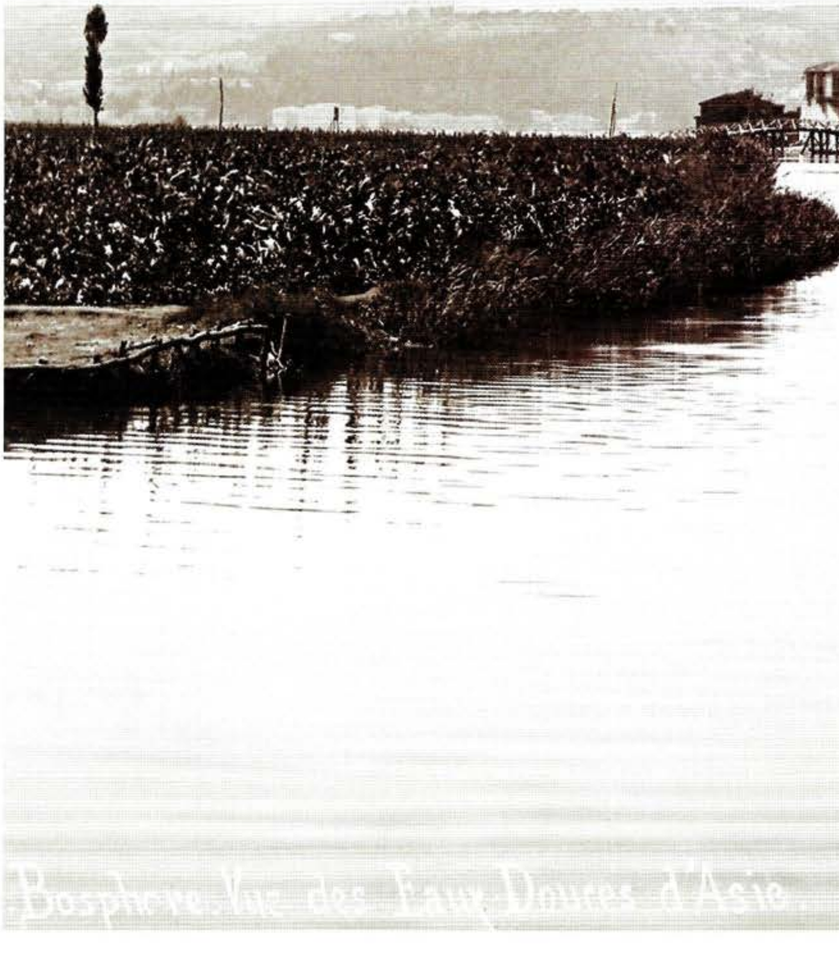
Trapped by traffic jams, hemmed in by housing estates and skyscrapers, Istanbullus can console themselves by dreaming of the city as it was a hundred years ago.

In the reign of Abdülhamit II, it was known as Asithane, "the house of happiness". Far more than London or Paris, Istanbul then looked completely different. As Nurhan Atasoy's magnificent new album, *Souvenir of Istanbul: Photographs from the Yıldız Palace*, shows, the streets were free of crowds, cars were unknown and most houses were built of wood (almost all, including the mansions of Süreyya Pasha, Fehim Pasha and Osman Pasha, shown in the book, have been pulled down). The Bosphorus was used only by a few elegant ferry-boats and caiques. Shop signs were not in Turkish and English, but in Ottoman, French, Greek and Armenian.

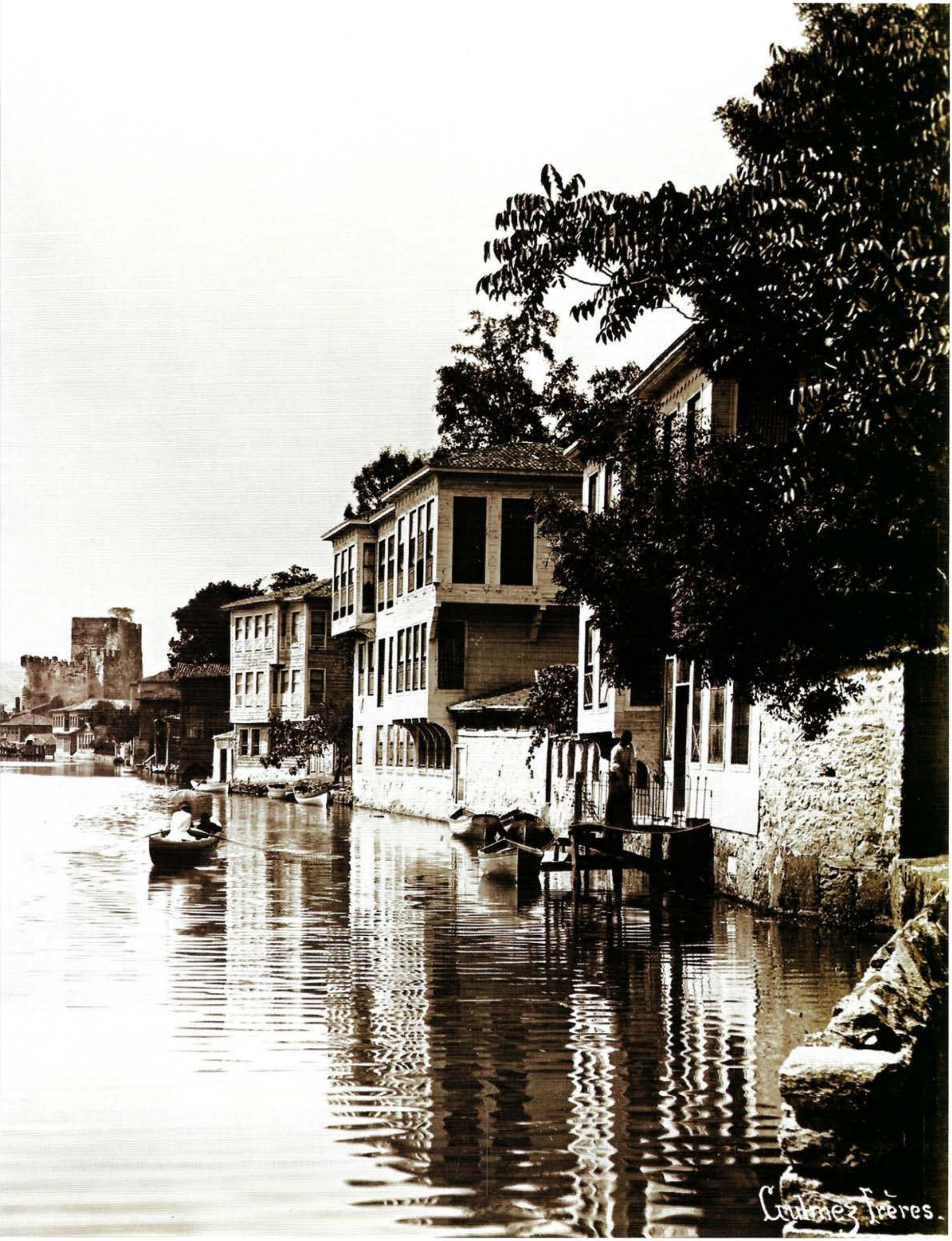
Sultan Abdülhamit had many faults, but a lack of curiosity was not one of them. While reluctant to be photographed himself – perhaps he felt it inappropriate for the Caliph of the Muslims – he loved photographs of others. In the library of his palace city of Yıldız, on a hill above the Bosphorus, he accumulated books, manuscripts and 36,535 photographs in 911 albums.

Souvenir of Istanbul reproduces some of the views of Istanbul from the sultan's library. It contains 268 photographs, each printed on a separate page, and thirteen double-page panoramas.

Saved from the attack on Yıldız in April 1909 by the gallant librarian (who kept some books and photographs for himself), and removed to Istanbul University's library in 1925, the photographs



Out for a row on the 'Sweet Waters of Asia', with the towers of Anadolu Hisari beyond. This photograph by the Gülmez Frères is from the Yildiz album 'Locations and Mosques of the Bosphorus' (no 90450)


Gulmez Frères.

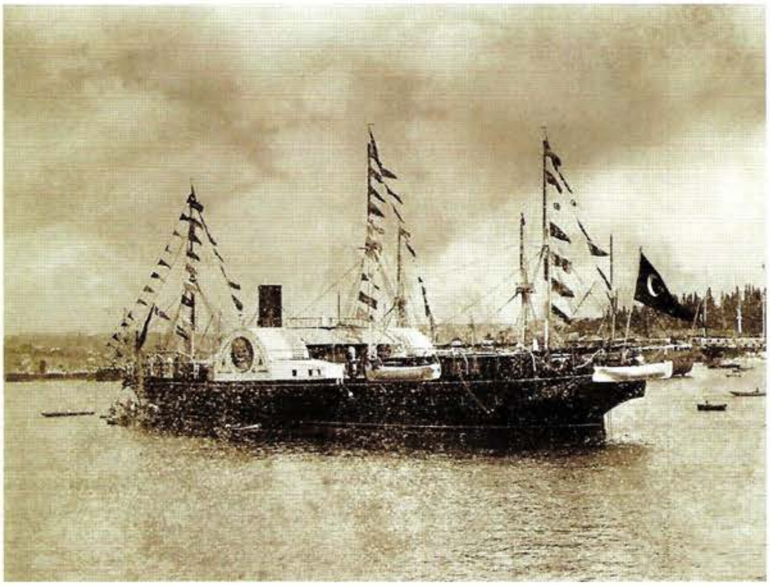
BAHADIR TAŞKIN

are now, after years of neglect, under proper care.

Dating from the 1850s to the 1920s, they are a poignant memorial to the sunset of empire. They show not only princes, princesses and palaces, but also cities, railways, schools, hospitals – and the ornate clock towers erected throughout the empire, both to encourage punctuality and to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the sultan's accession to the throne.

Rather than nostalgia for the past, or monarchical self-obsession, the photographs reflect imperial desire for modernisation and control. In some cases they were sent to Yıldız Palace by provincial authorities in response to official requests. The sultan used photographs as a weapon, to check on the truth of officials' reports on the progress of a railway or a hospital. He requested photographs of, for example, government employees and criminals, in the belief that they would help him understand their characters and judge whether the former were suitable for promotion, the latter for pardon. From 1890 photographs were used in government school certificates.

The superb pioneering books of Engin Çizgen (Özendeş) (*Photography in the Ottoman Empire*, *Ali Sami Bey*) and Bahattin Öztüncay (*The Photographers of Constantinople*) concentrate on the history of the first Istanbul photographers and their studios. Nurhan Atasoy focuses on the history and use of the sultan's photography collection. One of the best official photographers was Ali Sami Bey, chief photographer of the naval ministry. He died in Greece in the 1930s, a royalist exile. Many of the photographers were Christians. The Armenian Vichen Abdullah, formerly a court photographer to the sultan, was banned from the palace for secretly selling Abdülhamit's photograph. By 1889, however, he had been restored to favour and given a pension. His photographs predominated in the albums sent by Abdülhamit in order to advertise the empire's progress to state libraries in Washington,



BAHADIR TAŞKIN

Above: Abdülhamit II's yacht, the 'Sultaniye', bedecked with flags to mark the 25th anniversary of his accession – from an album of 11 photographs (no 90401) dated 1887–89 by Ali Sâmi Bey, instructor in photography at the Imperial Naval College. Above right: caiques on the Golden Horn, one of 128 images by the Dresden-based Emil Römmler Jonas in the Yildiz Palace album 'Istanbul and its Environs' (no 90479)

Paris and London. For Nurhan Atasoy it is especially significant that in the Yıldız photographs there are no veiled women, apart from hospital patients: "All the girl pupils are depicted with their heads uncovered."

The fatal alliance with Germany, of which Abdülhamit was so proud, is represented by photographs of the arrival of the Kaiser's imperial yacht off Dolmabahçe and the inauguration, in 1901, in Sultanahmet of the fountain he gave to the sultan.

The allure of the photographs in this book explains why a foreign diplomat said in the early years of the republic: "The Ottoman dynasty made Istanbul a place of incomparable beauty. It is up to the Turkish people to preserve it." In 2007, some consider, the preservation of Istanbul's beauty is a lost cause.

Philip Mansel is the author of *Sultans in Splendour* (Parkway), which includes one hundred old photographs, and *Constantinople: City of the World's Desire* (John Murray; new Turkish edition published by Everest, November 2007). Both available from CORNUCOPIA (cornucopia.net).

BOOKS OF THE YEAR

Masters of their art

By Yolande Crowe

Magic of Clay and Fire: A History of Kütahya Pottery and Potters
By Garo Kürkman
Suna and Inan Kıraç Foundation
Istanbul, £135

It is to the credit of the Suna and Inan Kıraç Foundation it has made possible the publication of Garo Kürkman's enlightened research on the history of Kütahya and its potters. John Carswell's pioneering work in the 1970s and several recent catalogues have shed light on the variety of these ceramics. But this volume incorporates further information on earlier Turkish ceramics, as well as early Ottoman tilework, in both Islamic and Christian buildings. An exhaustive list of inscriptions and their translations, both in Ottoman Turkish and Armenian, alongside a comprehensive survey of potters' marks, provides an unrivalled body of information.

The colourful decoration of Kütahya tiles and ceramic objects, so unlike the ornamental beauty of Iznik design, is truly enhanced by the layout of this handsome volume. Numerous pieces from Turkish collections have been included. They underline the great variety of shapes and designs, used in particular in the eighteenth century by Kütahya potters on such items as dishes, basins, ewers, candlesticks, moneyboxes, mugs and bottles, gourds and jugs. Less famous pieces, such as the lamp from the Gulbenkian

LEFT: THE KÜTAHYA POTTERY OWNER MEHMET ÇINI (SEATED CENTRE) IN 1927, HIS SONS TALAT AND RIFAT AND A TEAM OF POTTERS. ABOVE: A 19TH-CENTURY TILE DECLARING THE UNITY OF GOD

Collection in Lisbon, have also been brought to light. So has the large collection of small cups, rescued from an eighteenth-century wreck discovered in the Sea of Marmara, between the island of Büyükada and the suburb of Kartal. Since 1987 these have been stored in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art in Istanbul. The illustrations of tiles, dated 1719, in the Surp Hagop monastery in Jerusalem, take up over twenty pages.

The traditional decoration of Christian manuscripts does partly explain the biblical illustrations on both tiles and dedicated dishes, though the naivety of most designs comes closer to those found on amulet scrolls, often with seventeenth-century dates. These scrolls were decorated with scenes from the Old and New Testaments, and with figures of saints and holy men. Other designs, some quite fantastic, have not to this day been explained. Jean Soustiel, in *La Céramique Islamique* (Fribourg, 1985), perceived the influence of Indian chintzes, but did not engage in further research. Fortunately, this has recently been achieved with the analysis of floral designs found on eighteenth-century palampores from the Coromandel coast of India. Some of these painted cottons were used as hangings in front of church altars.

In a brief first chapter Önder Bilgi introduces the reader to the region's earliest ceramic production, and shows it to have started in the early Bronze Age, continuing through the Hittite period and the Phrygian Iron Age, on through Hellenistic and Roman times and ending with the Byzantine era.

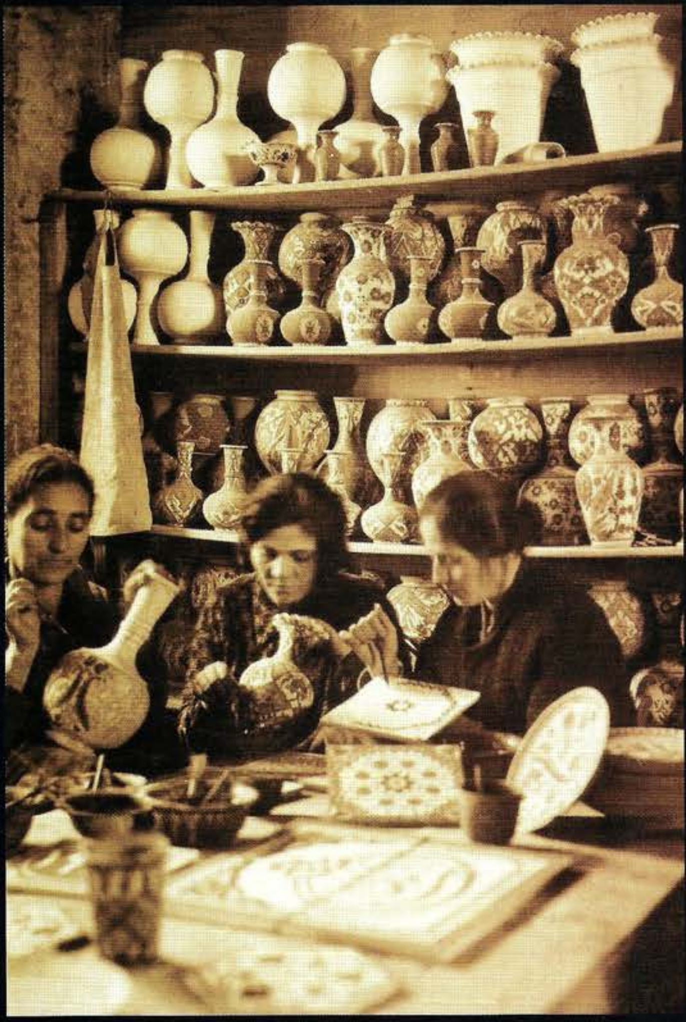
Besides the historical background of the town of Kütahya itself, an impressive survey of documents by Garo Kürkman has produced a fascinating list of potters, mainly working in Kütahya, from the Tabrizi fiteenth-century tile-maker Muhammed Mecnun (who signed his work in the Yeşil Cami, or Green Mosque, in Bursa), to Mehmed Emin Efendi (1872–1922), a leading name in the great revival of tile-making before the First World War. He often worked in partnership with the Minasyans, as well as with David Ohannesyan, who was to move on to Aleppo, Jerusalem and eventually Cairo. Stepan Vartanyan also became famous for his designs for tiles in Ottoman foundations and Armenian churches. Ten of these are reproduced, showing a meticulous adaptation of classical Iznik motifs, which are given a new lease of life. Special mention should be made of the lists of potters, both Muslim and Christian, in local documents dated 1764 and 1766.

In the first part of the annexes, Michael Rogers surveys in nine pages seven centuries of Ottoman architecture and the tilework related to it. This dense résumé underlines the precarious balance between supply and demand in the metropolis (Istanbul) and the provinces (Iznik and Kütahya) supplying it with ceramic goods.

The Turkish–English glossary of ceramic terms which follows should be used with care. Its translations will be useful to foreign collectors, but anyone using the references to world ceramics, mainly drawn from Turkish sources, should be wary of a number of inaccuracies.

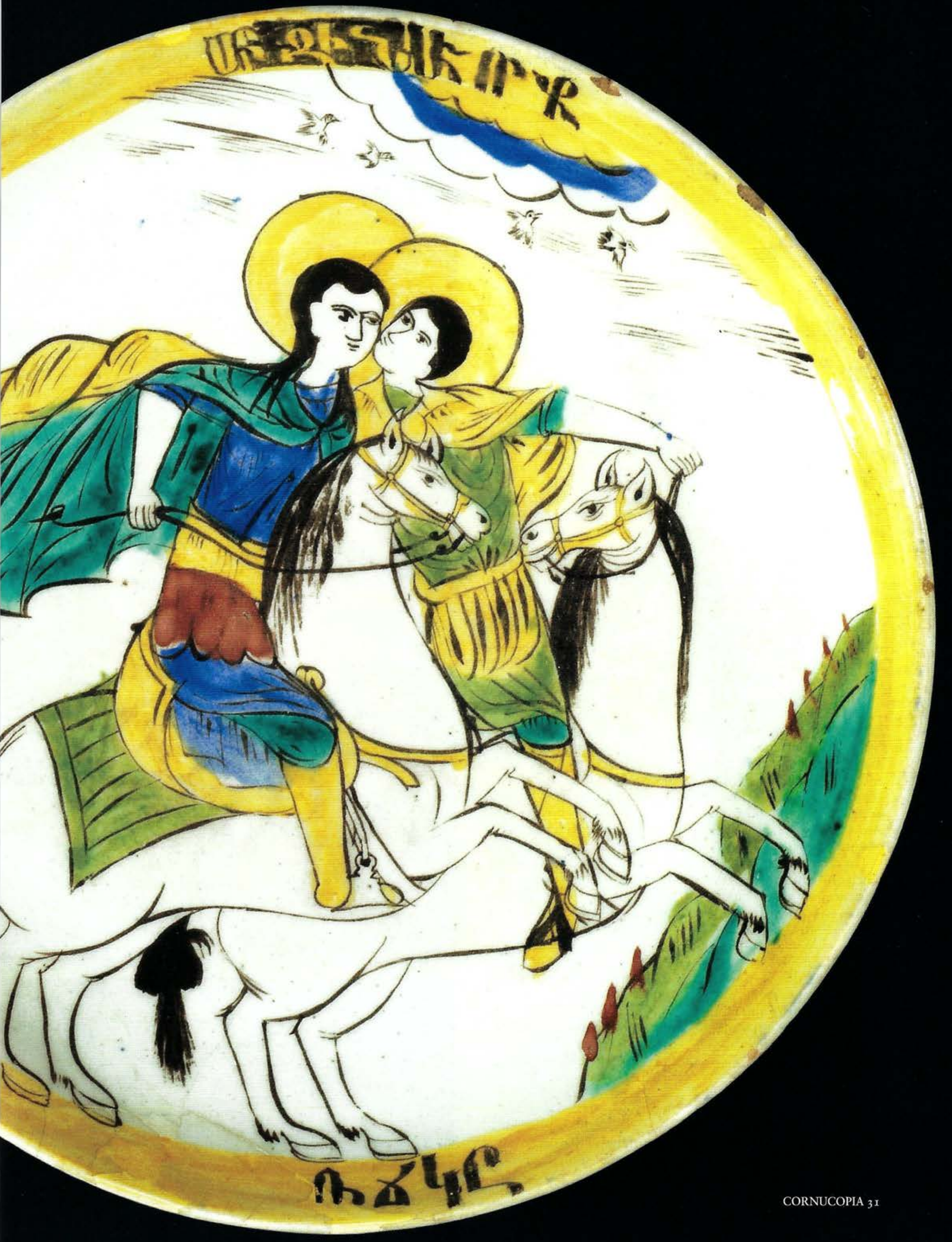
To conclude, this welcome volume truly brings forward our knowledge of Kütahya and its production of ceramics down the ages.

Yolande Crowe is an independent scholar and lecturer currently working on the origins of Kütahya design. Her paper 'Out of the Blue' will appear in Transactions of the Oriental and Ceramic Society, *vol 71*



RIGHT: A KÜTAHYA PLATE PAINTED IN 1719 DEPICTING ST SERGIUS AND HIS SON MARDIROS. LEFT: A CERAMICS DECORATION WORKSHOP IN KÜTAHYA AT THE TURN OF THE 20TH CENTURY. THE TOWN'S POTTERIES ARE STILL THRIVING

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS: SUNA & INAN KIRAÇ FOUNDATION



BOOKS OF THE YEAR

Wild about Anatolia

By Ursula Buchan

Flowers of Anatolia
(Anadolu Çiçekleri)
By Fatih Orbay,
Tekfen Kültür, Istanbul
Hardback, 266pp,
306 colour plates, price $120

Anatolia has for many years been an irresistible draw to botanists and flower enthusiasts from all over the world, both for the richness of its flora and because so many flowers are endemic to the region. In other words, they grow nowhere else. Anatolia covers roughly 400,000 square kilometres. It has three climate types – Mediterranean, maritime and continental – and encompasses Mediterranean coastline, high mountains, such as the Taurus and the northern Anatolian ranges, as well as plateaux and steppes.

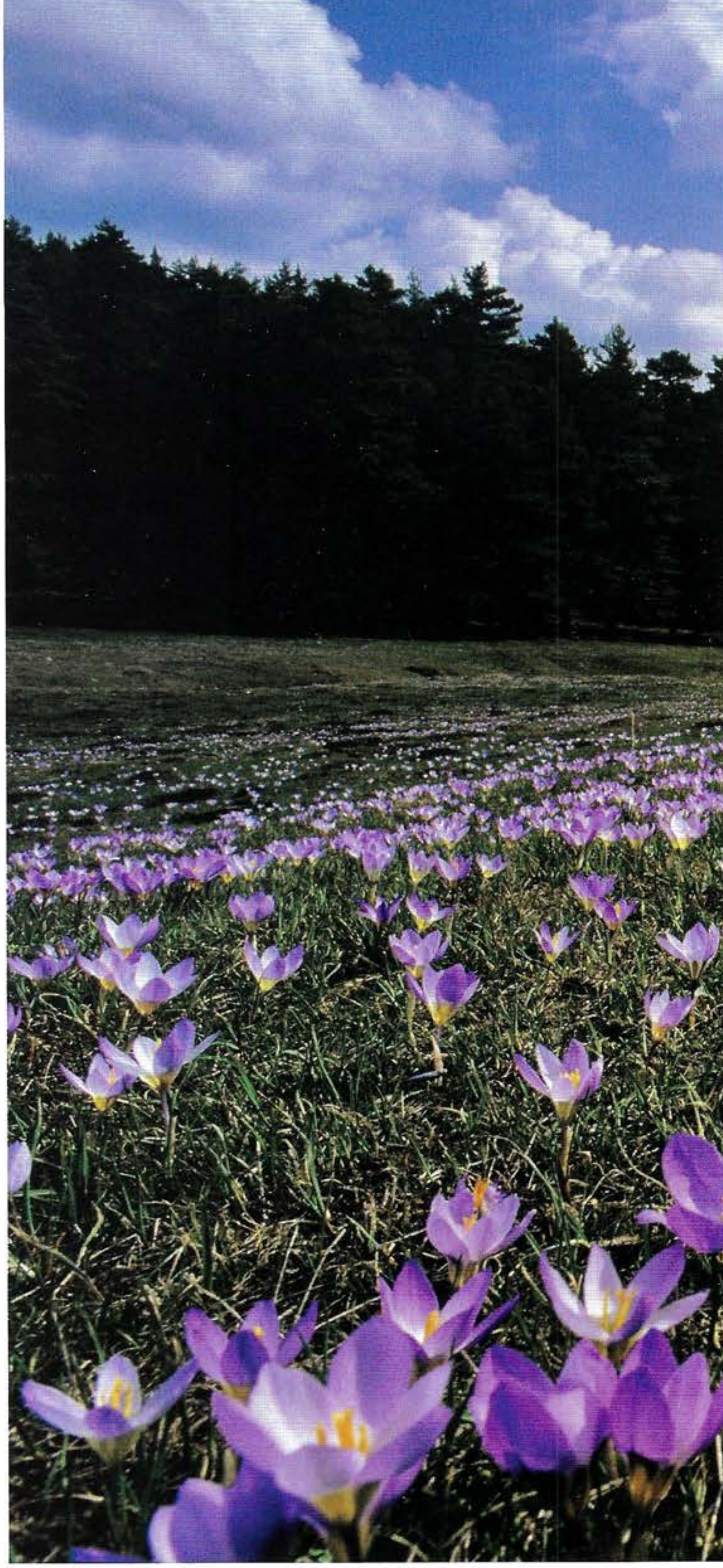
The semi-arid nature of much of Anatolia means that it is particularly rich in bulbous plants, especially of the lily, iris and hyacinth families. These, almost without exception, have beautiful, fascinating flowers. Despite this, there are few books on Anatolian flowers, a deficiency which Fatih Orbay, the well-known Turkish film producer and wildlife photographer, has set out to remedy in his first book, *Flowers of Anatolia*, published in a bilingual edition.

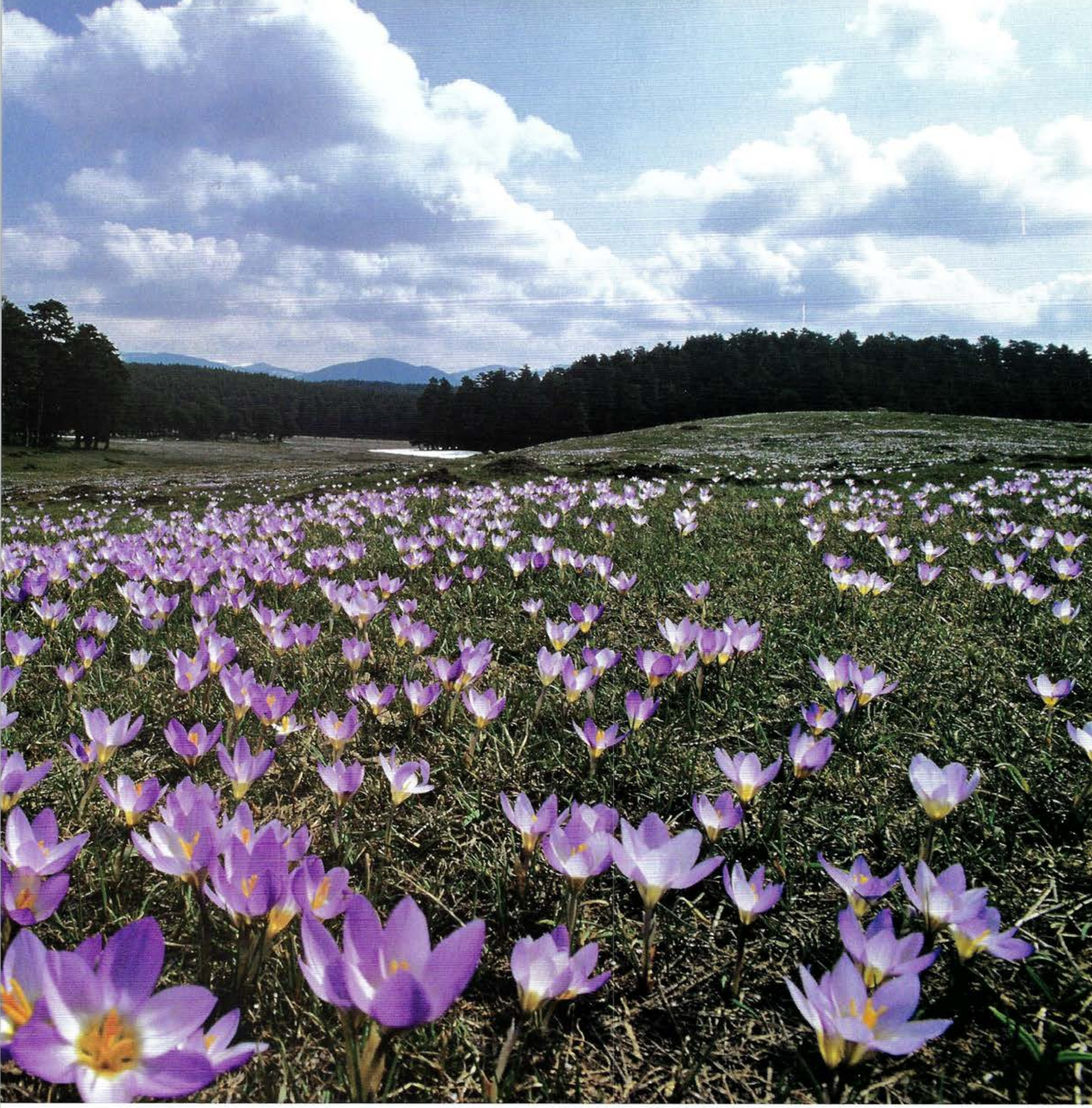
Over the past twenty years he has scoured Anatolia in search of flowers to photograph, often in very difficult and inaccessible places. Some bloom only for a few days – and not even every year. In the process, he has built up an archive of some 15,000 colour images, from which 306 have been selected for this book. It is an impressive achievement, demonstrating a rare combination of willpower, energy, patience and artistic sensibility.

The pages of *Flowers of Anatolia* measure 28cm across, so there is ample space to do justice to the pictures, together with short captions. (Orbay received help in both botanical identification and English-language captioning from an expert on the Turkish flora, Dr Martyn Rix.) The quality of both the images and the colour reproduction is outstanding, the blue spectrum having come out particularly well.

Most of the photographs are close-ups of flowers, showing with great clarity their make-up, down to the last tiny hair and pollen grain. *Arnebia pulchra,* for example, has bright yellow flowers, some with a purple blotch on them, meaning they have not yet been pollinated, others, already visited by insects, with no blotch. These photographs also constitute an important scientific record – partly because a number of the plants depicted here are endangered by man-made and climatic pressures.

Moreover, there are a number of quite remarkable double-page panoramas, which give an idea of what Anatolian landscapes are like. There are, for example, mountain meadows jewelled with blue muscari or crocuses in their tens of thousands, against a backdrop of snow-capped peaks, as well as old cornfields





ABOVE: PHOTOGRAPHED NEAR BOLU BY FATIH ORBAY IN MARCH 2002, A MEADOW COVERED WITH THE TWO-FLOWERED *CROCUS BIFLORUS* SUBS. *PULCHRICOLOR*. SUCH HUGE COLONIES OF THIS RARE CROCUS, ENDEMIC TO NORTHERN ANATOLIA, ARE A SURE SIGN OF AN ECOSYSTEM TOO PRECIOUS TO LOSE. LEFT: THE FLOWER IN CLOSE-UP. ORBAY DWELLS LOVINGLY ON DETAILS, DOWN TO THE LAST DEWDROP

on the Muş Plain richly spangled with red *Tulipa sintenesii.* One of my favourites is a field of the beautiful but strange *Iris iberica* subsp. *elegantissima*, looking, as Professor Dr Mehmet Koyuncu memorably describes them, like "white doves on the ground".

If I have a criticism, it is that such concentration on the minutiae of the flowers of plants, often substantially greater than life-sized, means that the reader does not always have a notion of how the complete plant would look. Of course, this book book does not pretend to be a field guide (Erdoğan Tekin's *The Most Beautiful Wild Flowers of Turkey* is far more suitable for that), but if you were using it to hunt for flowers in Anatolia you would not necessarily recognise them from the book.

Notwithstanding, Orbay has produced a book to cherish and dream over on winter evenings in Istanbul – or London, come to that.

Ursula Buchan's latest book, with Anna Pavord and Brent Elliot, is *Garden People: Valerie Finnis and the Golden Age of Gardening* (Thames & Hudson, £16.99)

The delectable fruit of the strawberry tree, *Arbutus unedo*, known variously as bear fruit (koca yemiş), sandal tree or davulgu. Large bushes of it cover the hills of the Princes Islands and the upper Bosphorus, where Fatih Orbay took this picture. The wood is used in Turkey for carving spoons

Blossom of the almond-leaved pear, 'Pyrus amygdaliformis'. Wild pear trees are known in Turkish as 'ahlat'; this one is often used for grafting. Its own fruit is dried before eating, and the pips are ground to make flour for 'sulphur' bread ('kürküt ekmeği')

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Santa, get a life

By Robert Ousterhout

Santa: a Life: The Epic Journey from Saint to Santa Claus
By Jeremy Seal, Picador £7.99

"Who is *that*?" asked Yıldız, waving her cigarette in the direction of our neighbour's Christmas display. Yıldız had just arrived from Turkey for the holidays and we were taking a post-prandial walk around the block. Something amidst the swirling snowflakes was upsetting her. To be sure, our neighbour's annual pageant of coloured lights and lawn ornaments irritates a lot of people. But I'd hoped she would appreciate the spectacle as an American cultural phenomenon.

The source of her annoyance appeared to be the brightly illuminated elderly woman beside the brightly illuminated Santa, both just alighted from a brightly illuminated sleigh. "That's Mrs Claus," I explained. "Mrs *Santa* Claus?" She was incredulous. "Is no such person! St Nicholas was *bishop*. Bishops do not have wives." And Yıldız should know. For she had spent years excavating the Byzantine church of St Nicholas in Demre, on Turkey's south coast, where the blessed bishop was buried. If he'd had a wife, she would have known.

My Christmas present to Yıldız was a copy of Charles W Jones's *St Nicholas of Myra, Bari and Manhattan*, a book of impeccable scholarship tracking the saint's transmogrification across centuries and continents from Orthodox bishop to jolly old elf. Much was illuminated, but the missus was missing. "I do not understand your country," Yıldız harrumphed.

I remembered her visit years later, reading Jeremy Seal's *Santa: A Life*, which covers much the same turf, but with an emphasis on the turf (Seal is a travel writer). Seeing Yıldız's name in the acknowledgments, I wondered if he had been able to explain Mrs Claus to her. Alas, though the missus receives a passing mention, she remains as shadowy as the original St Nicholas himself.

Despite his popularity today, what is remarkable about the actual St Nicholas is how much we do *not* know about him. Discounting the transformations of the past two centuries, he remains firmly grounded as the patron saint of Greece, Russia, children, prisoners, sailors and travellers. Every Greek port has a chapel dedicated to him; Greek ships carry his icon in the belief that "St Nicholas holds the tiller". Since the Middle Ages he has held universal appeal as one who intervenes to right injustices against the common people.

Here is what we do know: he was born in Patara on the south coast of Turkey, around 300 AD. He became bishop of Myra (now Demre), died and was buried there around the middle of the fourth century. That's all.

Over time his biography has been embellished, and embellished... Despite evidence to the contrary, he is said to have attended the Council of Nicaea in 325 where, a staunch defender of Orthodoxy, he apparently slapped the heretic Arius and made his teeth rattle. By the sixth century he has rescued three citizens of Myra from unjust execution, and appeared in a dream to the Emperor Constantine to save three imprisoned generals from false accusations. So says the *Praxis de Stratelatis*, the first recorded version of his life. Giving presents comes later: in the ninth century we hear how he secretly provided dowries for impoverished girls so their fathers would not be forced to sell them into prostitution.

Nicholas's story has been fleshed out with borrowed incidents from the lives of others – mostly another St Nicholas, abbot of the Monastery of Sion (near Demre at Kumluca), whose life story was written in 564. This Nicholas performed healing miracles and exorcisms, stilled storms at sea, fed the populace during a famine, and travelled to Jerusalem. He even visited his namesake's *martyrium* in Myra.

There is, of course, no evidence of martyrdom – our Nicholas was a bishop, not a warrior – but he apparently began performing miracles from beyond the grave. By the early tenth century he was recognised as a *myrobletos*, after myrrh started oozing miraculously from his mortal remains. This confirmed his saintliness and provided pilgrims with a perfect souvenir – bottled sanctity. Myrrh was, of course, the name of his home town, leading the Byzantine scholar-emperor, Constantine Porphyrogennetos, to write that Myra is the "thrice-blessed, myrrh-breathing city of the Lycians, where the mighty Nicholas spouts forth myrrh in accordance with the city's name".

By the tenth century his popularity was universal – it helped that Myra was an important port of call in the eastern Mediterranean. And as Nicholas was credited with calming storms at sea, myrrh from his tomb enabled travellers quite literally to pour oil on troubled waters.

From the eleventh century, his embellished life story appears in words and images. At his birth he proves his special status by standing in his bath; he fasts regularly, drinking his mother's milk only on alternate days. He attends school, is consecrated as a priest, then a bishop. He calms storms at sea; he saves the unjustly accused from execution; he secretly provides dowries; he resuscitates boys killed by the butcher during a famine; he rescues a boy kidnapped by Saracen pirates and made cupbearer to the emir. He fells the Cypress of Plakoma, sacred to Artemis, destroys her temple and disposes of a bomb she plants on board a ship. He enjoys a peaceful death and continues to perform miracles from the grave.

In 1087 Nicholas's mortal remains were stolen by sailors from Bari, in southern Italy. The *furta sacra* was justified, as most thefts of relics were justified: if Nicholas didn't want to go, he would have stopped them. At Bari the citizens constructed a grand new basilica, where the saint's tomb was set beneath the altar. The bones continued to ooze, and the process of draining and distributing the myrrh continued as well. By the late Middle Ages, Bari rivalled Santiago de Compostela as a pilgrimage destination.

The saint continued his travels into northern Europe, where St Nicholas's Eve is traditionally associated with children, presents, banquets and plays. Martin Luther believed this to be an idolatrous practice, declaring Christmas a better time for gifts. Thus the Weihnachtsmann, or Father Christmas, developed as a rival gift-giver, a Protestant compromise, though lacking the authority of tradition. Nevertheless, Adolf Hitler regarded the Weihnachtsmann as purely Aryan.

Santa Claus, as we know him, was created in New York, a combination of Nordic folklore, post-Reformation European traditions and a dollop of American inventiveness. Three figures may be credited with his fabrication. Santa features prominently in Washington Irving's imaginative 1809 spoof, *Dietrich Knickerbocker's A History of New York from the Beginning of the World to the end of the Dutch Dynasty*. While many credited Irving with serious archival research, scholars now believe he made it up. His friend Clement Clark Moore, a leading Hebrew scholar, furthered the invented tradition in 1822 with his anonymously published *A Visit from St Nicholas*. And Thomas Nast, the German-born *Harper's Weekly* illustrator, fleshed him out in 1863–64 with his creation of the image of the jolly old elf. Nash's Santa was immortalised by the illustrator Haddon Sundblom from the 1920s onward, in his

Coca-Cola advertisements. Their popularity, combined with Macy's annual parade, fixed our iconic image of Santa. The North Pole, elves, reindeer, the workshop, even a Mrs Santa, followed rapidly.

We might attribute our modern Santa to the strength of popular culture or perhaps the power of advertising. Nevertheless, the tradition grows. And the American reformulation compares favourably with his "invention" in Byzantine times. From staunch adherent of orthodoxy and protector of the common people we have developed a universal, non-sectarian, non-religious figure, who spreads the message of goodwill and capitalist greed.

Seal provides us with a breezy, readable history, in which the author wanders the streets of Patara and Demre in a futile search for traces of the saint in his youth, and stumbles through various sites on several continents. When, finally, Seal takes his young daughters to Lapland to visit Santa's village, it turns out perfectly. "He's the real one!" his daughters declare, to the author's relief.

Along the way we have learnt more about Jeremy Seal, traveller and parent, than about the saint. And he tends to play fast and loose with historical facts. But never mind – the book is a good read, and great fun.

From obscure saint to universal symbol, Santa has come full circle. Since 1990 the Greek Orthodox have been allowed to celebrate his feast day at his church in Demre. In predominantly Muslim Turkey, however, Nicholas has been transformed into Noel Baba – Father Christmas – an odd conflation of the European Protestant and the American capitalist versions. His statue has graced the entrance to the church since 1981. In 2000 the Russians added a bronze statue of the bishop in full regalia to the town square, replaced in 2005 by Mayor Süleyman Topcu by a gaudily painted concrete version of jolly old St Nick – red suit, white beard and all. Reactions have ranged from indignation to mild amusement. Personally I suspect that *this* Santa drinks Cola Turka rather than Coca-Cola. And that Mrs Claus will be joining him shortly. ◆

Perspectives on history

BY DAVID BARCHARD

The Cambridge History of Turkey, Volume 3
The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1839
Ed. Suraiya N Faroqhi, Cambridge University Press £95

Turkey from Empire to Revolutionary Republic:
The Emergence of the Turkish Nation from 1789 to the Present
By Sina Akşın, Hurst & Co, £16.50

When the two-and-a-third centuries covered in this latest volume of *The Cambridge History of Turkey* begin, the Ottoman Empire is the largest and most powerful state in Europe, second only to China in the whole Eurasian land-mass. At its close, the dying Sultan Mahmut II has just suffered a crippling defeat at the hands of his own vassal, Mohammad Ali of Egypt, and the empire temporarily has neither army nor navy. Worse still, the Great Powers of Europe have been eyeing the Ottoman Empire for fifty or sixty years with a view to seizing all its lands. Since they cannot do this without a major war among themselves, the empire survives to limp on through the nineteenth century, learning to profit diplomatically from their bickering.

For much of the eighteenth century the Ottoman state and society continued imperturbably along traditional Islamic lines, apparently unaware of the approaching danger. Two generations ago, two British scholars, HAR Gibb and Harold Bowen, published a magisterial volume on the empire on the eve of westernisation, but their method was remorselessly institutional. Today such studies are out of fashion, along with political and diplomatic history. So, too, is the idea of a "decline" of the Ottoman Empire as opposed to a more benign "decentralisation" – though the inconvenient fact that it grew relatively much weaker keeps on cropping up. Instead centre stage is taken up by social and economic history.

This 500-page study begins in true twenty-first-century style with a twenty-five-page article on ecology, followed by a rather short eighteen-page survey of "political and diplomatic developments" during two-and-a-bit centuries. Then come sections on the political culture of great houses, warfare and public finance, followed by "semi-autonomous forces" (Arab and Balkan) versus the imperial centre, and then "social groups" (Islamic clergy, Muslim women, Jews, Christians). Then come chapters on "making a living" (ie economics). This section includes a notably fine essay on the capitulations, the privileges enjoyed by the Western powers in the Ottoman lands, by Edhem Eldem. Finally there are chapters on music, arts and literature.

Many chapters read more like stand-alone essays than parts of an integrated volume designed to pilot a newcomer through the subject in the tradition Lord Acton established in *The Cambridge Modern History* a hundred years ago. The gaze of some contributors seems focused more on current academic writing, less on the past itself, and may look rather curious in a few years' time. Some essays, it must be said (for example Eldem and Carter Finlay), are excellent. Still, it might not be too harsh to suggest that for anyone wanting to be piloted through a vast subject area – much of it highly relevant to our own time – some eighteenth- and nineteenth-century books might make better introductory reading.

The concentration on social forces leads to a striking and somewhat depressing lack of interest in personalities and human beings as historical actors. The English has not always been well edited. And the overall treatment, perforce highly compact throughout, can become downright procrustean. Mahmut II and his contemporaries do not benefit from being lumped in with the eighteenth century, rather than (as has been the case until now) regarded as the uncertain and stormy beginning of a new era with radically new problems. In part this is because the volume, sidestepping the idea of "decline", also generally turns its eyes from what was Gibb and Bowen's starting point: the impact of the West, a process which was getting under way by the early eighteenth century.

Such an approach would not be welcome to Professor Sina Akşın, who states in *Turkey: From Empire to Revolutionary Republic* that the "Tanzimat was the beginning of the national movement for civil rights and constitutional government". This short, lively book is intended for absolute beginners and it gives them a readable but authoritative tour across 200 years of history which will surely leave them with a clear and deep understanding of how Turkey came to be the country it is.

Akşın starts in 1787 with Selim III and the impact of westernisation and nationalism in the Ottoman lands and takes us to 2002, the end of the Ecevit government and Turkey's growing confrontation with the EU. He writes in a plain, colourful style, conveying an unmistakable sense of the flavour of the times and the people who lived in them. If there is an important question to be asked about why things unfolded as they did, he pauses to ask it, giving brief but lucid answers drawn from a deep understanding of his period. ◆

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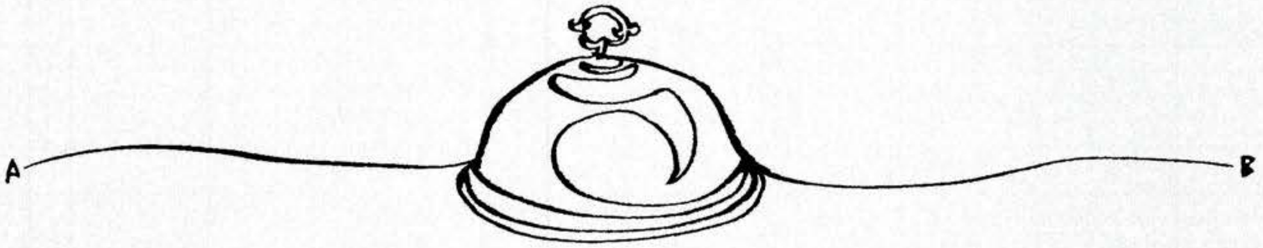
Elbistan cicim, wool on wool, nineteenth century

BERRIN TOROLSAN © CORNUCOPIA



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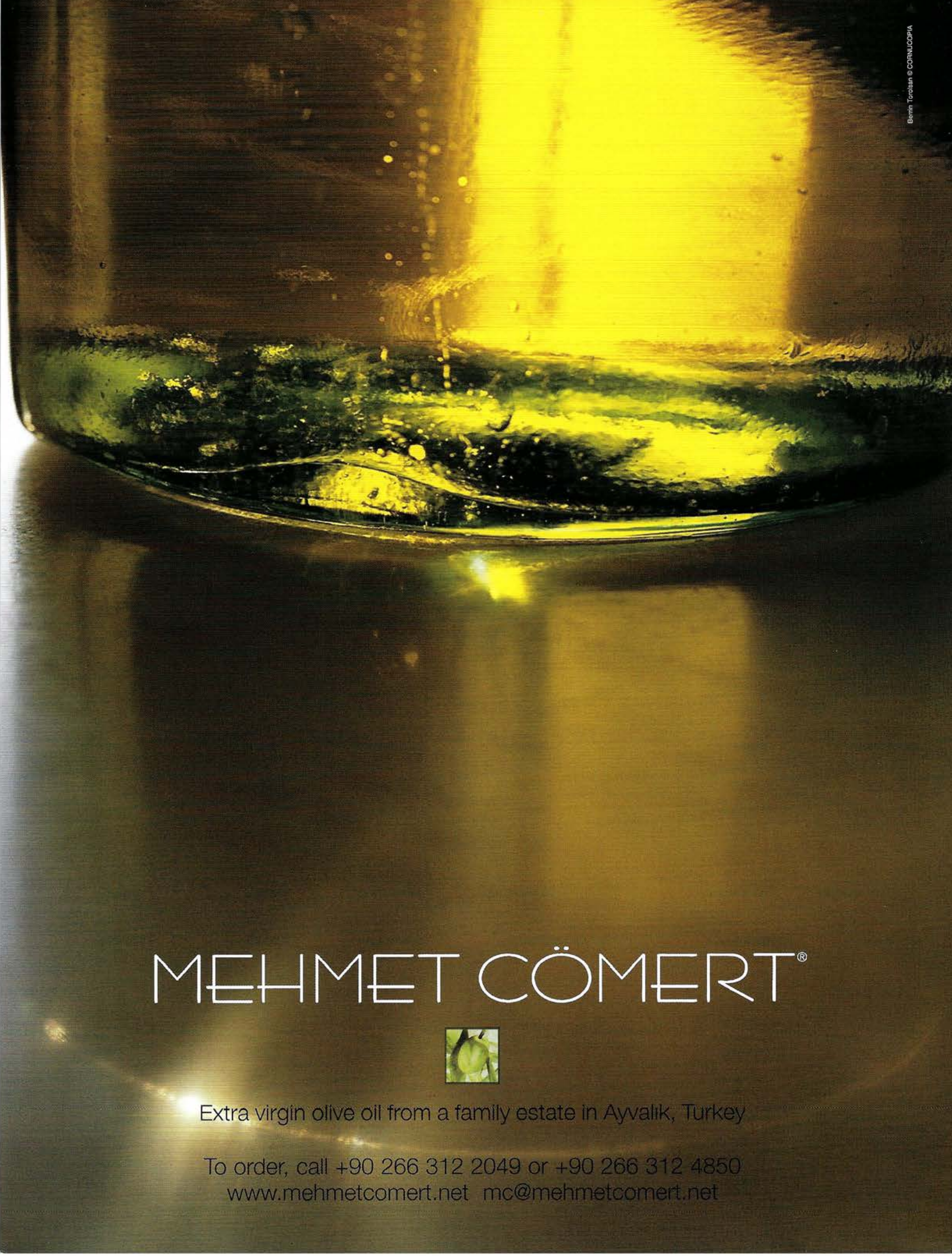

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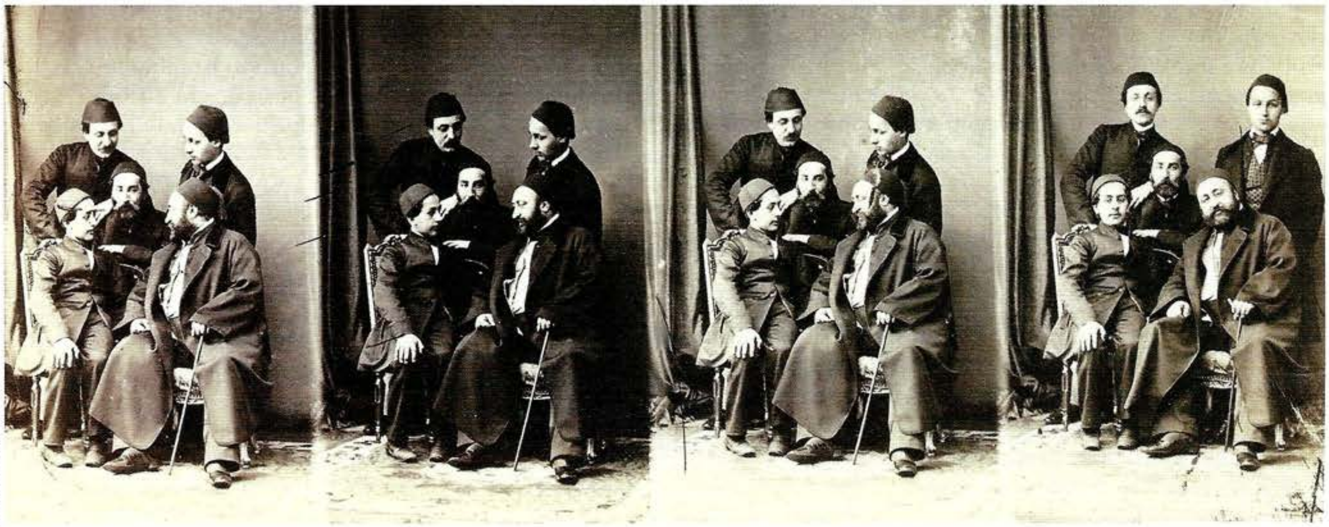
AS BURSA LAY IN RUINS AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE OF 1855, THE MAN THE SULTAN SENT TO RESCUE THE CITY WAS AHMED VEFIK PASHA. A BRILLIANT MAN OF LETTERS, CHAMPION OF OTTOMAN CAUSES AND VERY UNDIPLOMATIC DIPLOMAT, HE WAS TO LEAVE AN INDELIBLE MARK ON TURKISH CULTURE.

DAVID BARCHARD REINSTATES A WAYWARD HERO

THE PATRIOT



ÖMER M KOÇ COLLECTION

AHMED VEFIK PASHA IN 1860, WHEN HE WAS OTTOMAN AMBASSADOR TO PARIS, POSES WITH TWO EMBASSY SECRETARIES AND THEIR SONS

On Wednesday, February 23, 1855, a series of powerful earthquakes, around 7.5 on the Richter scale, shook Bursa. Even in a century when major earthquakes in western Turkey seem to have been considerably more common than in our own time, the Bursa earthquake was an exceptional disaster. The centre of the town was first struck around 9.30 in the morning, but a few hours later an almost equally strong aftershock hit Kemalpaşa, about 60km to the southwest. In Bursa itself, frightening tremors continued every hour or two for the rest of the day. Several hundred people died immediately. Monuments, mosques and churches were damaged and thousands of homes wrecked. Only two of the twenty domes of the town's most famous mosque, the Ulu Cami, were left intact. Fires raging among the wooden houses of the town claimed more lives. It was recognised as an international disaster. Britain sent two ships with emergency wheat to feed the population of the stricken city. Two months later, yet another aftershock killed around 1,500 people in the surrounding region.

For six years the city's monuments and public buildings lay largely in ruins. But Bursa had been the first Ottoman imperial capital and Sultan Abdülaziz did not forget it. In December 1861, soon after coming to the throne, he dispatched one of the most brilliant men in the empire, Ahmed Vefik Pasha, a diplomat and man of letters, to the town to restore the city's Ottoman monuments.

It cannot have been an altogether welcome commission. Ahmed Vefik was back in Turkey after eighteen months as Ottoman ambassador in Paris. His time there had ended in a public row with Napoleon III over a Parisian play which insulted the Ottomans and Islam. Ahmed Vefik had climbed on to the stage to protest – a gesture which led to his recall.

Ahmed Vefik's time in the French capital had seen much other turbulence and grown into folklore. The French foreign ministry had rebuked him for buying a white carriage which was easily confused with that of the Emperor. (It was apparently bought as a reprisal after the French ambassador in Istanbul made a replica of the Sultan's barge for himself.) Turkey and the French Empire were at odds over fighting between Christians and Muslims in the Lebanon. When France landed troops there, Ahmed Vefik told Edouard Thouvenel, Napoleon III's domineering foreign minister, that if he had been in charge there, and not Fuat Pasha (one of Turkey's leading statesmen), the French troops would have been met with bayonets. Fuat is reported to have been furious. Napoleon merely commented that Ahmed Vefik was a better patriot than he was a diplomat.

All this perhaps explains why, once back in Istanbul, Ahmed Vefik was not given another embassy but was appointed *evkaf nazırı,* or minister of

Islamic endowments. He held the job for only eighteen months, but his rebuilding programme is largely responsible for preserving the ancient city for us today.

The restoration was energetic, but not entirely the work of an Islamic cultural purist. Then in his late thirties, Ahmed Vefik had spent much of his life until then in the West, and some of his restored mosques incorporate gothic and classical touches.

Born in July 1823, Ahmed Vefik was the grandson of the first Muslim to work as a translator for the Ottoman government. He was probably of convert Greek or Bulgarian extraction – his friend Henry Layard thought so, and Ahmed Vefik's translations of Molière contain jokes reflecting familiarity with Greek – but he himself, in later life, shrugged off the idea with a joke. His father, Ruhuddin Efendi, was secretary to Mustafa Reşit Pasha, the government's leading westerniser during the reign of Mahmut II (1808–39) and his son Abdülmecit I (1839–62.) Throughout his life, Ahmed Vefik would remain one of Mustafa Reşit's staunchest followers – a loyalty which helped stunt his public career. When Mustafa Reşit went to Paris as ambassador, in 1834, Ruhuddin Efendi and his son, Ahmed Vefik, then eleven years old, went with him. In what was an extraordinary experiment for those times, the boy was sent to the French Lycée de St Louis, and remained there for nearly four years.

Ruhuddin Efendi was a committed and advanced westerniser and pushed ahead with his son's education on the family's return to Istanbul. Two of the brightest young officials in the British embassy – Henry Layard, the future archaeologist and ambassador, and James Longworth, a fellow diplomat – were invited twice a week to grand Ottoman-style dinner parties in Ahmed Vefik's home, staying afterwards for what were effectively tutorials. In his autobiography Layard describes Ruhuddin Efendi's home as "a *konak* or mansion provided with no European luxuries", divided into men's apartments and women's apartments, and containing no chairs or tables. It was decorated with "carpets of beautiful texture and exquisite in colour and design. Everyone sat cross-legged, Oriental fashion" on very low divans covered with silk from Bursa or Damascus. There were hordes of servants, summoned by clapping rather than by bells, but no eunuchs or slaves, for Ruhuddin and his son would not tolerate them.

Together father, son and the two young diplomats would read Dickens, Shakespeare, Gibbon, Adam Smith, Hume and Robertson and debate economics, politics and the news of the day. Ahmed Vefik would roar with laughter at *The Pickwick Papers,* in particular, which, like many a nineteenth-century Englishman, he came to know largely by heart.

"He was the most cheerful, most merry, and most entertaining of companions… He was always ready to impart information, and had none of those scruples and prejudices which prevented Turks from speaking to strangers, and especially to Europeans. His father was equally communicative and free from prejudice," Layard recalled many years later.

AHMED VEFIK WOULD ROAR WITH LAUGHTER AT 'THE PICKWICK PAPERS', WHICH, LIKE MANY A NINETEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISHMAN, HE CAME TO KNOW LARGELY BY HEART

It was assumed that Ahmed Vefik would rise to the highest offices of the empire, including the grand vizierate – something which duly happened, when Layard himself was British ambassador to Turkey. And yet the lives of both men did not turn out quite as they had hoped.

Ahmed Vefik followed his father into the Chamber of Translators in the palace, a body rapidly metamorphosing into a foreign ministry. In 1840 he was embassy secretary in London; in 1842 in Serbia; and in 1847 he served as imperial commissioner in Wallachia and Moldavia. The same year also saw his first achievement as a scholar and man of letters, when he devised, wrote and published the first-ever *Ottoman Almanac*, or *salname*, the forerunner of a widespread and important late-Ottoman genre.

By the end of the decade he had become a member of the sultan's council, one of Mustafa Reşit's brightest hopes for the future. In 1851 he was sent for three years as minister to Tehran, one of the most difficult Ottoman postings. While there he deepened his knowledge of Farsi and got to know the forms of Turkish, such as Chagatay, which existed beyond the eastern borders of the Ottoman Empire.

On his return to Istanbul he was appointed, in swift succession, minister of justice, and, in December 1859, ambassador to Paris. The outcome, as we have seen, was not happy. Yet it yielded remarkable by-products. His subsequent work as a restorer, for example, was not confined to Bursa: his repair work on the eighteenth-century decoration in the Süleymaniye Mosque in Istanbul is considered a triumphant success.

But after his time as a restorer in Bursa, Ahmed Vefik's career was in the doldrums. Layard wrote that his virtues – honesty, independence and contempt for less honest men – and his failings combined to thwart his progress. "His impetuous and sarcastic speech made him many enemies and prevented him from attaining a position in which his recognised integrity, his great knowledge and his capacity for business might have enabled him to be of real use to his country," Layard wrote.

Fatally for Ahmed Vefik's prospects of advancement, he was on very bad terms with Mustafa Reşit's successors as leaders of the Tanzimat reform movement, A'ali Pasha and Fuad Pasha, who were Turkey's effective rulers for nearly a decade. Both were consummate diplomats and professional bureaucrats. To them he must have appeared a loose cannon. Not until A'ali died in September 1871 did Ahmed Vefik return to the uppermost levels of Ottoman public life. Instead he served on several imperial councils in the early 1860s, taught history for a few months at the Darulfünun, the newly founded forerunner of Istanbul University, and, between 1863 and 1865, was a government inspector in

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Balıkesir and Bursa, where he set up new villages for Circassian refugees driven out of their homeland north of the Black Sea.

He himself had married a Circassian servant girl from his mother's household. When Henry Layard once asked him why he had not married the daughter of a high-society family, he replied that having no in-laws meant fewer pressures to bestow corrupt favours, and that he conveniently saw his father-in-law only once every four or five years. He added, with what Layard calls "a boisterous laugh": "I was not aware that mothers-in-law are an institution of your high civilisation which you are prepared to recommend as one of the reforms to be introduced into Turkey."

SIMON UPTON

During the years he was banished to the sidelines, Ahmed Vefik worked on his scholarly interests, translating sixteen Molière plays, working on a Turkish dictionary and a history of the Turkish people, and living in a *koru* (grove) beside the Bosphorus at Rumelihisarı.

In 1871, after A'ali's death, there was a virtual change of regime as the great pasha's followers were dismissed from their jobs and his opponents, headed by Mahmut Nedim Pasha, took their places. It was a short and fairly disreputable period in Ottoman history, which culminated within half a decade in national bankruptcy, the overthrow and mysterious death of Sultan Abdülaziz, and finally in war and the loss of half the Balkans.

Ahmed Vefik became head of the grand vizier's office but tempers flared and he was sidelined to the ministry of education. By 1873 he was in the wilderness once again and held no official post for three years. During this interval he completed

TOP: THE ŞEHADET MOSQUE, AFTER THE 1855 EARTHQUAKE IN BURSA. AHMET VEFIK PASHA OVERSAW ITS RESTORATION. ABOVE: CALLIGRAPHIC PANEL OVER THE ENTRANCE TO AHMED VEFIK'S LIBRARY AT RUMELI HISARI ON THE BOSPHORUS IN ISTANBUL. THE LIBRARY TODAY (FAR RIGHT) AND IN AHMED VEFIK PASHA'S DAY (RIGHT)

COURTESY OF LEIDEN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Lehçe-i Osmanî, the first-ever dictionary of Ottoman Turkish and probably his most important work.

Ahmed Vefik was on cool terms with Midhat Pasha, the liberal westernising reformer of the mid-1870s who became vizier in the early summer of 1876. In early February 1877 Midhat Pasha sent a trusted junior, Ismail Kemal Bey, to visit Ahmed Vefik at his home. The evening ended with hope of a political breakthrough: Ahmed Vefik promised to pay a visit to Midhat Pasha, which would have broken the ice. But the meeting never took place. That very night, Sultan Abdülhamit II unexpectedly sacked Midhat Pasha and sent him into exile.

Nevertheless, Ahmed Vefik's hour had once again come. On February 22, 1877, the first-ever Turkish National Assembly met. Ahmed Vefik had been elected a deputy for Istanbul and was sworn in as president of the chamber. Alas, yet again the pasha was harsh and unyielding with his words. His command to a deputy to stop talking, "*Sus!*" (be quiet), or in some versions "*Sus eşek!*" (shut up, you donkey), was overheard in the public gallery and got into the history books. (According to the *Times* correspondent, Antonio Gallenga, Ahmed Vefik was engaged in quelling a Greek deputy whom he had warned that Turkish was the only official language and might shortly be used even in churches.) Yet a week or later *The Times* reported that the parliament was making good progress and that its proceedings were promising.

The crisis with Russia deepened into one of the Ottoman Empire's most dangerous wars. The following year, in February 1878, Ahmed Vefik became not grand vizier but prime minister of Turkey (as the office was temporarily renamed) and minister of the interior. By then Russian armies had reached St Stefano (Yeşilköy) and were poised to seize the Ottoman capital. The British, egged on by Queen Victoria and her pro-Turkish prime minister, Benjamin Disraeli, wanted to send the Royal Navy to forestall the capture of Istanbul. The British ambassador in the city, and the staunchest opponent of the Russians, was Henry Layard. When Layard had been appointed, in April the previous year, Lady Stratford de Redcliffe, wife of his former boss, wrote to him: "How glad you will be to see your old friend, Ahmed Vefik Pasha, sitting as President over the Parliament... I am sure it will remind you of the happy olden times."

But times could not have been more different or more difficult. Abdülhamit distrusted the British and decided to try to cut a separate peace with the Russians, sending Ahmed Vefik to talk to them at Yeşilköy. Then the Turkish prime minister had the duty of telling his old friend Layard that the British navy would not be allowed to go through the Dardanelles. It came, nevertheless, and in so doing probably ensured Turkey's continued independence, despite Ottoman protests. It is clear from the letters between them that the friendship between the two men continued, but it was adroitly concealed from the public eye by both. They could, however, work together on humanitarian efforts to relieve the 200,000 refugees who had flooded into Istanbul as a result of the war.

> He is seen as a key figure in the emergence of modern Turkish culture... If he needs a monument other than his library, it is surely the early Ottoman monuments of Bursa

But Ahmed Vefik lost the trust of the sultan and was accused of training a gang of refugees to depose him. In April 1878 the pasha was dismissed and the following year he was sent as governor to Bursa. There he remained, apparently giving much of his time to productions of his translations of Molière, the rehearsals for which his disgruntled officials were obliged to attend. His actions were increasingly described as "strange".

As time went by, some of the townsfolk of Bursa began to call for his removal. A ten-point report to the sultan accused the pasha of many irregularities, including, of course, lining his own pocket, but also, more plausibly, of using harsh words and actions. Despite this, when he was recalled to Istanbul in November 1882, he was made prime minister again. But something went horribly wrong. Appointed to office on November 30 that year, he was sacked on December 3. Most likely his tongue was responsible.

Ahmed Vefik lived out the last nine years of his life in his wooden villa on the Bosphorus, surrounded by his library, said to have contained 15,000 books and certainly the largest private collection in the city. He was a recluse and also poor. To rescue his finances, he sold most of the hill and groves to Robert College, an American missionary organisation that was destined to evolve into today's University of the Bosphorus. When he died in 1891 he was laid to rest in its wooded grounds. "Let him be buried there and hear the church bells ringing," quipped Abdülhamit.

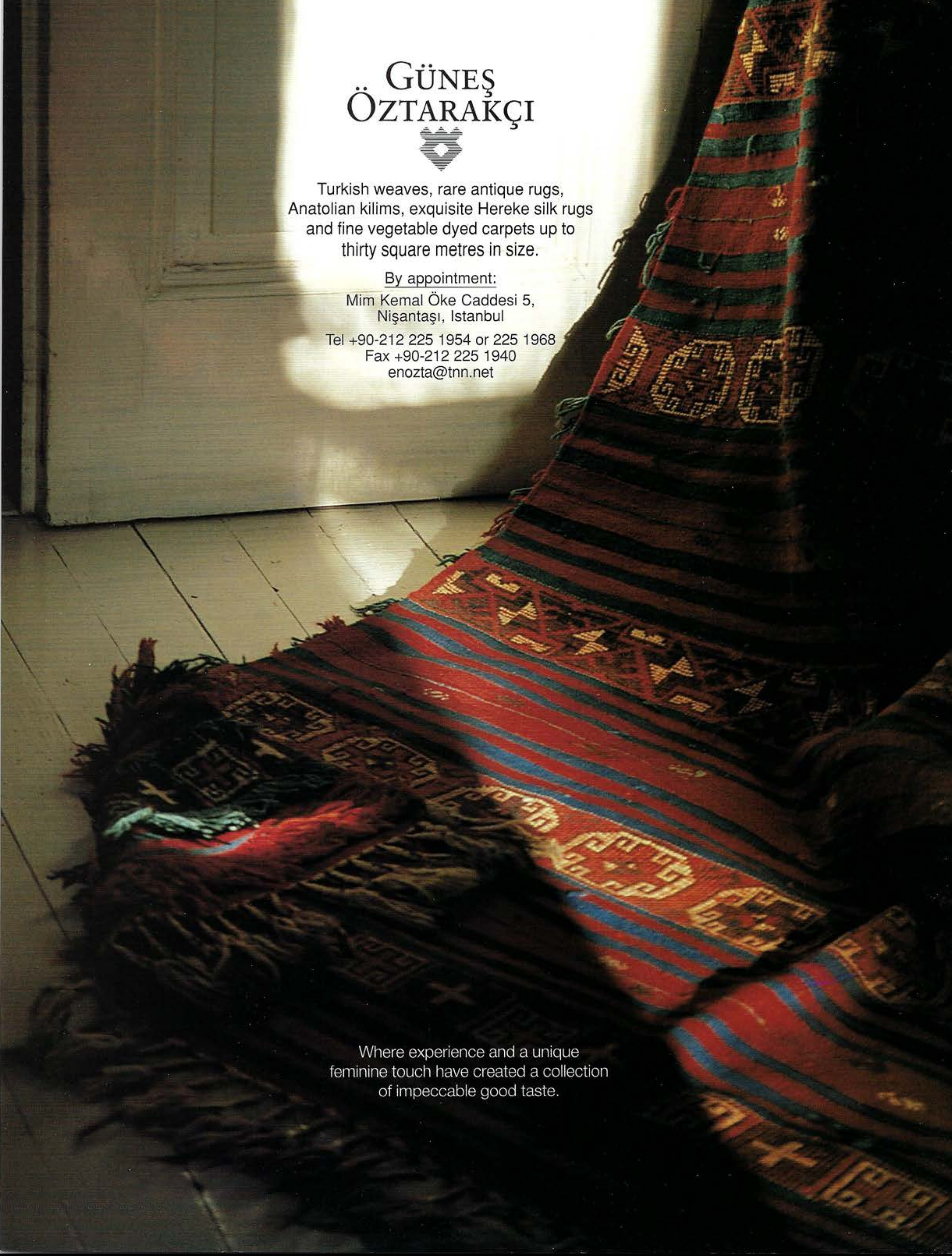
But Ahmed Vefik has not gone down in history as a Western stooge, a charge that he would stoutly have denied, for he believed in a version of Islamism. Rather he is seen today as the founder of Turkism and a key figure in the emergence of modern Turkish culture. Though his life and work did not follow the course he expected in his youth, it left an indelible mark on his country. And if he needs a monument other than his library, it is surely the early Ottoman monuments of Bursa, masterpieces of an art which is both Islamic and European, and which more than any other individual Ahmed Vefik Pasha preserved for us today. ◆

The author wishes to thank Sinan Kuneralp and Gül Tokay for unpublished quotations from Henry Layard. They come from the first-ever edition of Layard's memoirs, soon to be published by Isis Press, Istanbul

- David Barchard is currently writing a book on Turkish–European relations since 1800, to be published by Hurst, London

- The multiple-pose carte-de-visite image of Ahmed Vefik Pasha by Disderi on the opening page is from *Hatıra-i Uhuvvet, Portre Fotoğrafların Cazibesi 1846–1950* by Bahattin Öztuncay (Koç Yayınları)

- Ahmed Vefik Pasha's library was the subject of an article by Patricia Daunt (photographs by Simon Upton) in CORNUCOPIA 8. The library is also the setting for Maureen Freely's new novel, *Enlightenment* (Marion Boyars)



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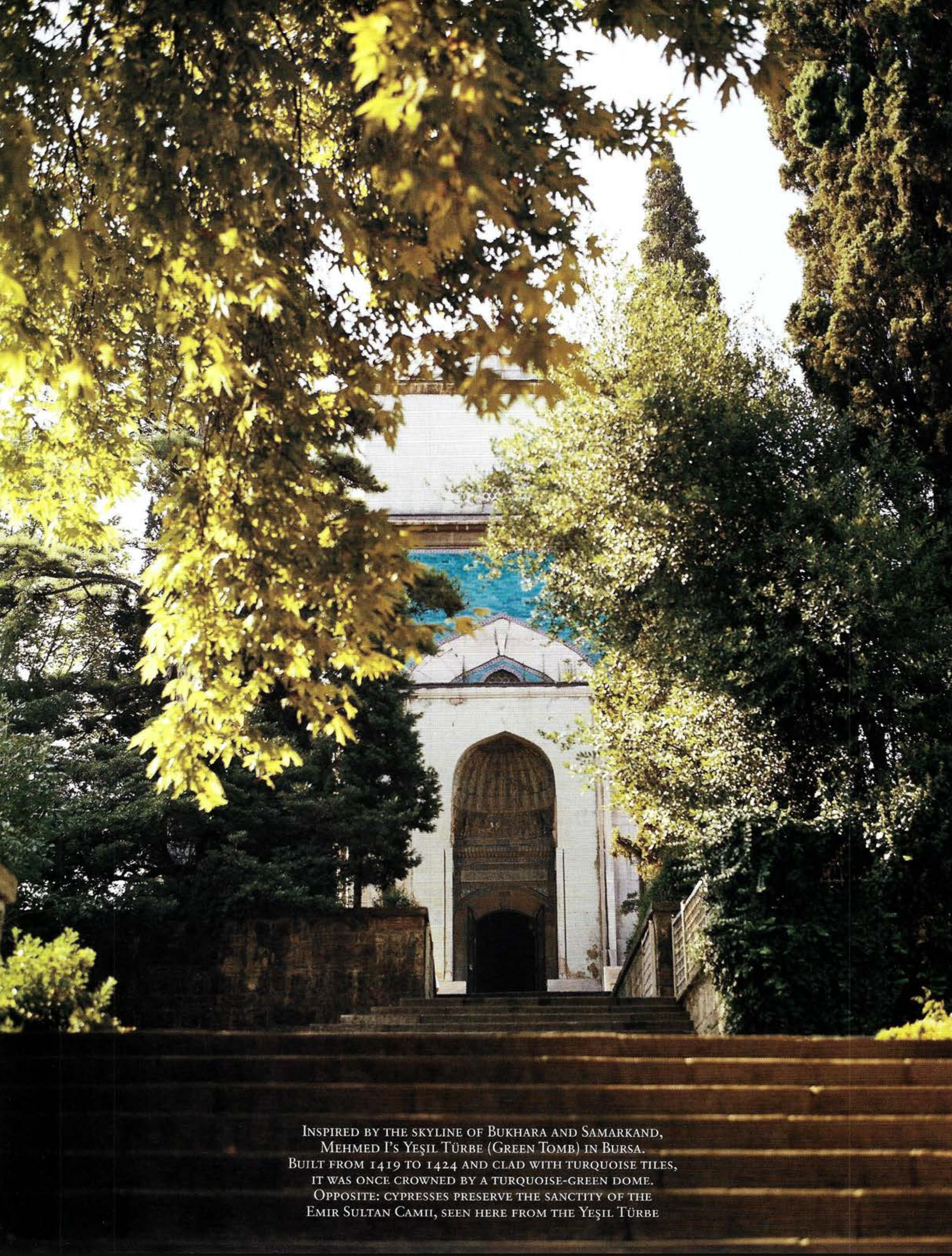
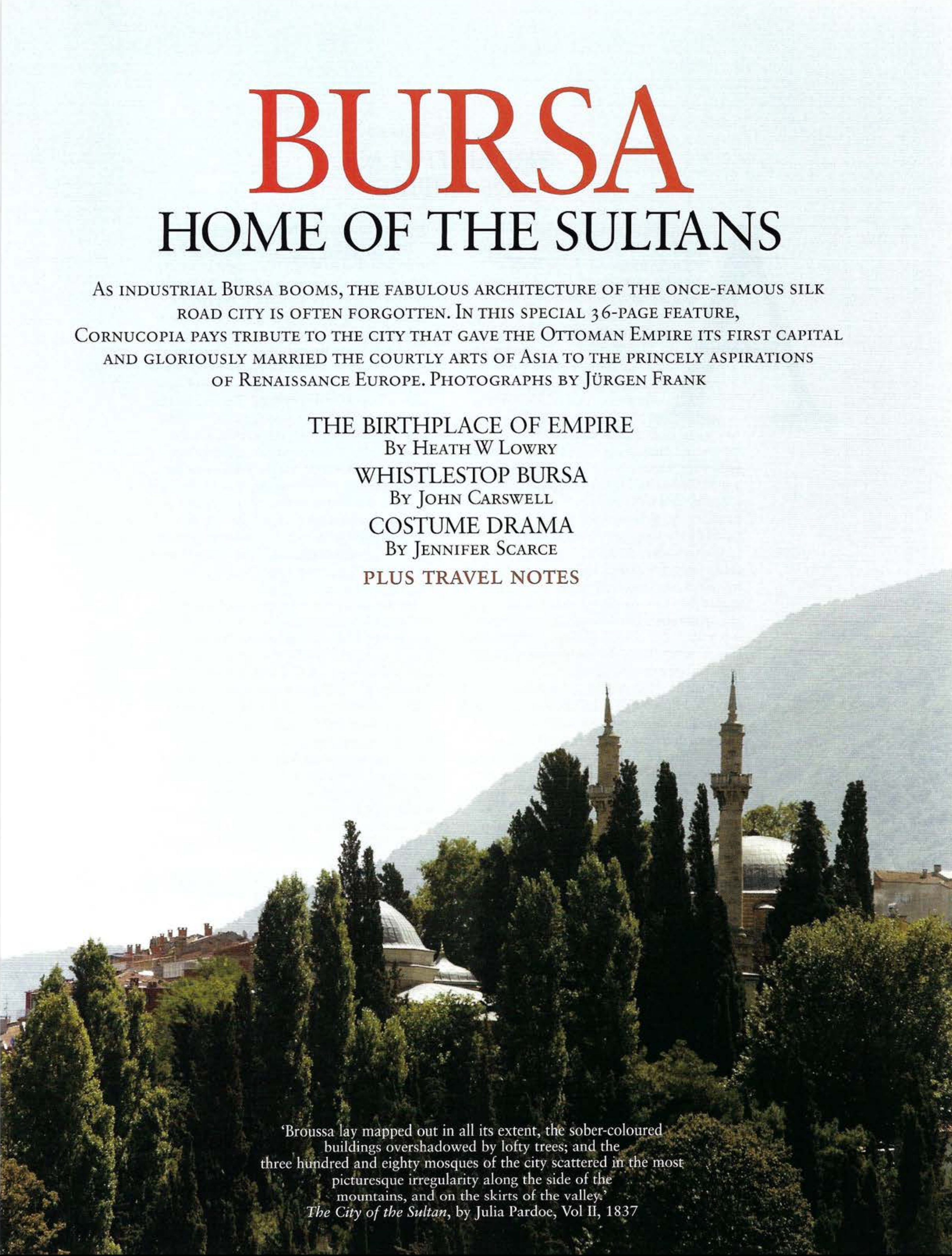


Inspired by the skyline of Bukhara and Samarkand, Mehmed I's Yeşil Türbe (Green Tomb) in Bursa. Built from 1419 to 1424 and clad with turquoise tiles, it was once crowned by a turquoise-green dome. Opposite: cypresses preserve the sanctity of the Emir Sultan Camii, seen here from the Yeşil Türbe



BURSA

HOME OF THE SULTANS

As industrial Bursa booms, the fabulous architecture of the once-famous silk road city is often forgotten. In this special 36-page feature, Cornucopia pays tribute to the city that gave the Ottoman Empire its first capital and gloriously married the courtly arts of Asia to the princely aspirations of Renaissance Europe. Photographs by Jürgen Frank

THE BIRTHPLACE OF EMPIRE

By Heath W Lowry

WHISTLESTOP BURSA

By John Carswell

COSTUME DRAMA

By Jennifer Scarce

PLUS TRAVEL NOTES

> 'Broussa lay mapped out in all its extent, the sober-coloured buildings overshadowed by lofty trees; and the three hundred and eighty mosques of the city scattered in the most picturesque irregularity along the side of the mountains, and on the skirts of the valley.'
> *The City of the Sultan*, by Julia Pardoe, Vol II, 1837

HEATH W LOWRY

THE BIRTHPLACE OF EMPIRE

Along the skirts of the Bithynian Mount Olympus (known for half a millennium by the Ottomans as Keşiş Dağı, or Monk's Mountain), lies what remains of the first capital of the early Ottoman state. Once home to the most flourishing silk industry of the Middle East and fabled for its 300 minarets, it was a city dedicated in equal parts to commerce and religion. From the fourteenth until the early twentieth century, its inhabitants never numbered more than 50,000. Today it is a sprawling metropolis of over 1,500,000 which is home to Turkey's automotive industry and still a major centre of textile production, although the famed Bursa towels have long since outpaced its renowned silks. As for its minarets, which really only numbered 300 in the writings of travellers, they are still there, though one sometimes has trouble spotting them amid the apartments blocks and stores that mar what was once a vista of dozens of graceful spires rising above the maze of two-storey lath-and-plaster dwellings.

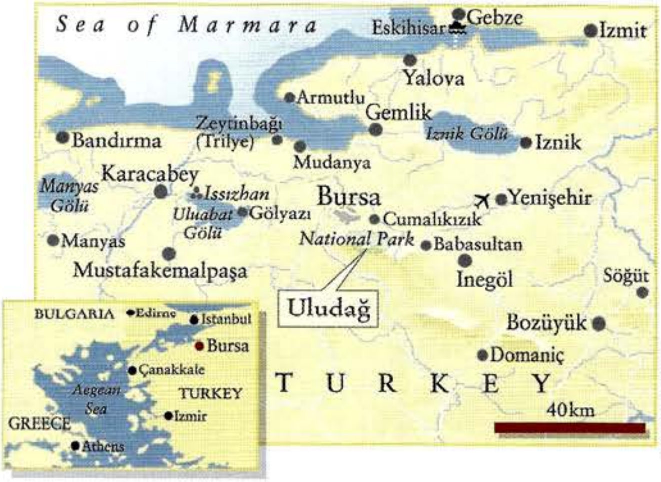
Equally famed was its natural hot springs, known in Turkish as *kaplıca*, which abound in the western suburb of Çekirge, and which by the end of the eighteenth century had been discovered by a handful of adventurous Europeans, who built a number of small spa hotels, immediately attracting parties of hardy visitors. This meant that Bursa soon became a popular weekend retreat for Europeans living in Istanbul, who sailed for eight to twelve hours to the port town of Mudanya on the Marmara Sea and were then transported by horse-drawn wagons over the forested hills and through fifteen kilometres of mulberry and fruit orchards to Bursa and its baths.

By the end of the nineteenth century the journey was made somewhat easier by the construction of a narrow-gauge railway connecting the two towns. Even that trip, however, was not without adventure: travellers reported how at steep grades along the way the male passengers were asked to disembark and walk on foot to the brow of the next hill, as the little engine didn't have quite enough steam to get itself and a full load of riders over the hills that surrounded the fertile Bursa plain.

Today, a pleasant (and quick) way to get from Istanbul to Bursa is the new fast ferry service from Yenikapı (along the sea walls of Istanbul) to Mudanya in a surprisingly quick seventy-five minutes. From there one takes a bus or taxi to Bursa and the whole trip takes less than two hours. If you travel with one of the several dozen books written by nineteenth-century visitors in hand, you will end up fully disoriented. For in place of the forested hills that once gave way to the vast Bursa plain, covered as far as the eye could see by plantations of mulberry trees (the leaves of which fed the silkworms on which the city's economy depended), the hills are now covered with the villas of Bursa residents who have escaped the city. In place of the mulberries are factories, outlet stores, car dealerships and row upon row of not always attractive apartment blocks. Such is the price of progress.

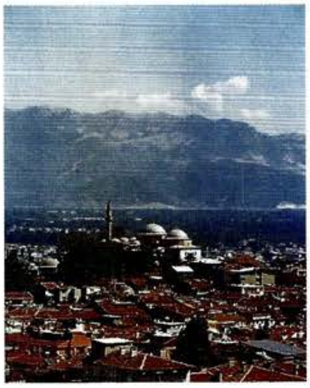
However, as one approaches the city, it is still possible to imagine how it came to be known as Yeşil (Green) Bursa, for the rivers and rivulets of icy water running down the slopes of Ulu Dağ (Great Mountain) – the not-so-romantic name by which the Mountain of the Monks has been known since 1925 – still feed the remaining foliage and convey a sense of what once was. Against the backdrop of the forested mountain itself, green is still the prevailing colour. Although at the rate human settlement is moving up the mountain, that too may soon be a thing of the past.

One of the less pleasant aspects of modern



SUSANNA HICKLING

life is the plethora of automobiles, which make getting around (let alone parking) an exciting and often frustrating task. The twenty-first-century visitor is advised to leave the driving to the hundreds of bright yellow taxis which always find a way through the traffic jams threatening to surpass even the congestion of Istanbul.



Bursa as described by visitors in earlier centuries was a warren of small, often dead-end streets with no apparent rhyme or reason to their makeup. What larger streets (dare I say boulevards) there are today are indirectly the result of the horrendous earthquake of 1855, which destroyed most of the city, and in whose wake an energetic governor, Ahmed Vefik Pasha, redesigned the grid and added what passes for main thoroughfares today. He also reconstructed most of the damaged historic monuments and introduced the residents to other aspects of Western civilisation, including the theatre. Indeed, Ahmed Vefik truly deserves credit as the father of the modern city. Without his tireless effort it is difficult to imagine what Bursa would look like today.

After countless visits in forty-plus years, Bursa still remains a personal favourite. I never come here without finding something new – not such a difficult task given that there are still well over a hundred minarets.

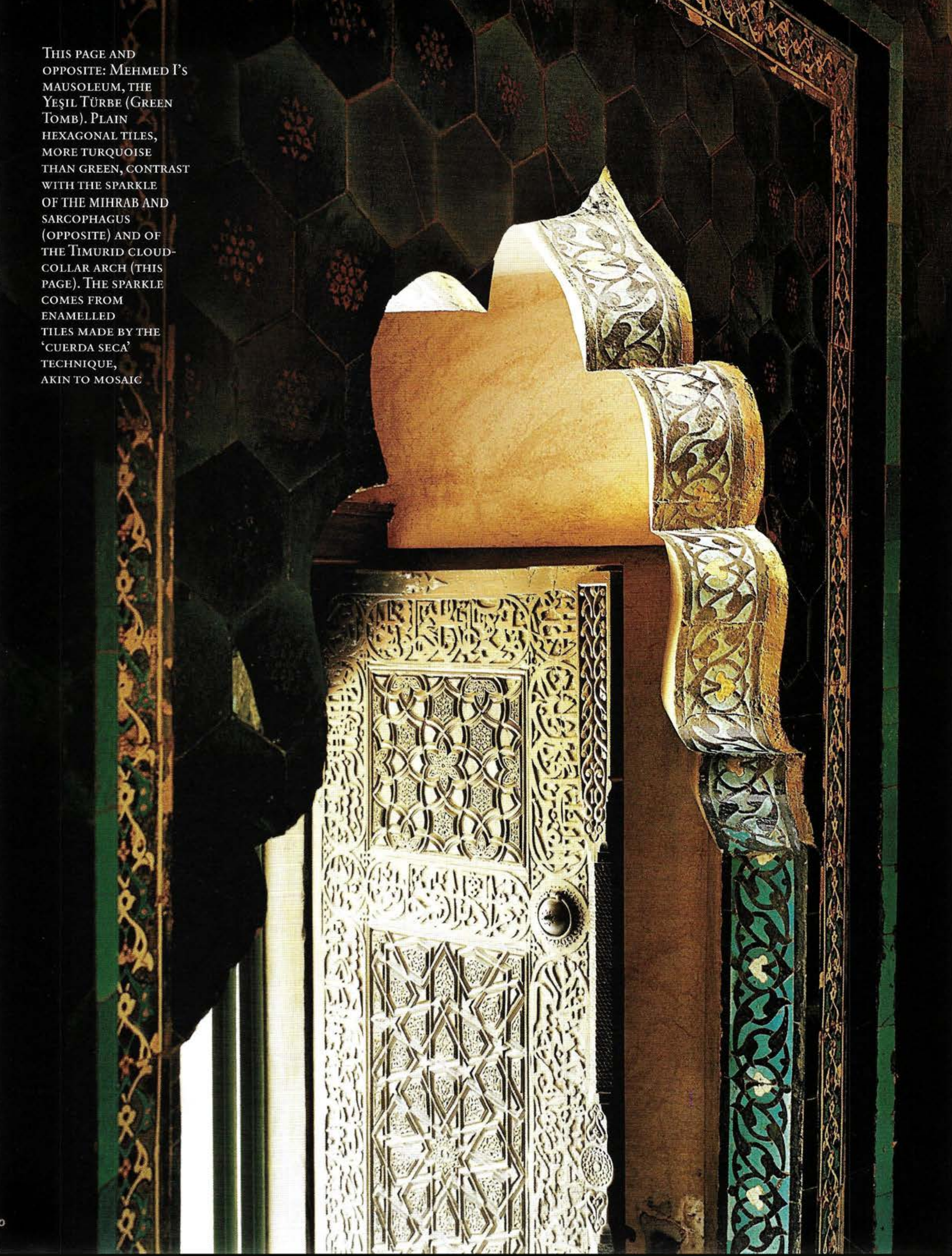
Should one tire of mosques, the massive courtyard caravansarays that once housed the city's artisans and manufacturers, including the impressive Koza (Silk) Han, with its dozens of venues offering goods made from the city's famous silks, are there to be visited. Anyone who thinks that silk is not still an important aspect of the city's life will be quickly disabused of the idea with a visit to this site. Where by the late fourteenth century the city was home to several dozen silk and wool merchants from Venice, Genoa and Florence, today buyers are more likely to fly into the city in the morning, place their orders and return to their Western European offices by late afternoon.

Today's answer to the vigour and vision of Ahmed Vefik Pasha is an equally energetic businessman and collector named Ahmet Erdönmez. Almost singlehandedly in the past decade he has goaded and shamed the city fathers into taking a long-overdue interest in protecting what remains of Bursa's Ottoman heritage. He began by creating the Kent Müzesi (City Museum). This is a labour of love containing a street in which the shops of craftsmen of an earlier era have been beautifully re-created. He was also involved in the restoration of the city walls and, most recently, with the restoration of the sixteenth-century Balibey Han, a unique four-storey edifice which clings to the slopes of the walled city. Indeed, my first stop on every visit to the city is the Kent Museum, where I learn from Ahmet Bey what has been done since my last visit.

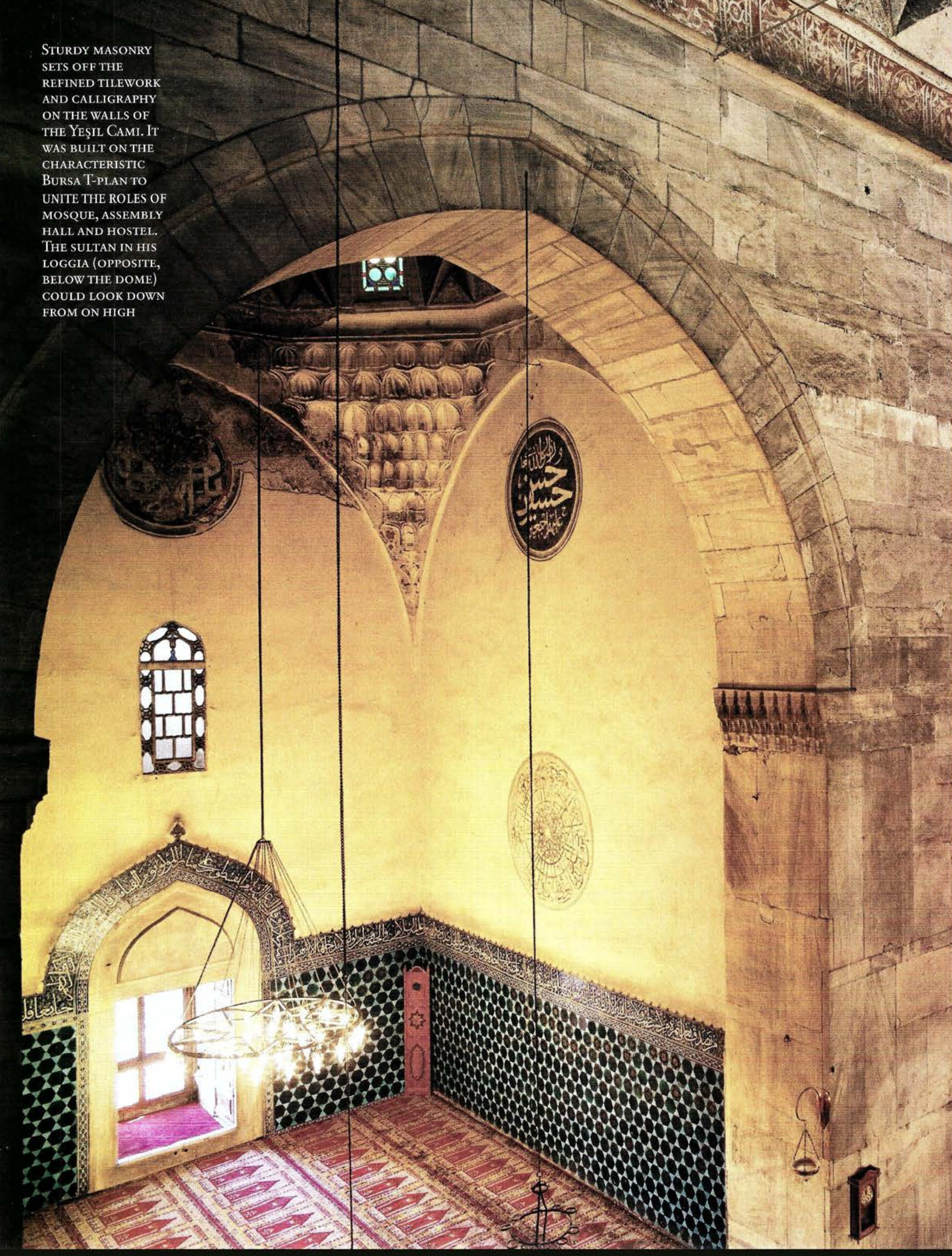
Among the things that are a must for every first-time visitor to Bursa is a visit to one of the city's *kaplıcas* (hot springs). My personal favourite is the Eski Kaplıca (Old Hot Springs), just below the Hüdavendigâr Mosque in Çekirge. Originally a Roman bath, today's structure was built in the fourteenth century by the third Ottoman ruler, Sultan Murad Han, known as Hüdavendigâr (the Ruler). We know of its past from nineteenth-century travellers, who described the Roman mosaics that lined the large bathing pool in the men's section until the 1855 earthquake. In the rebuilding, the mosaics were covered by the marble one sees today. Meticulously maintained, this bath has separate sections for men and women; the women's section (even without the mosaic floor) is reportedly just as pleasant as the men's.

This bath was renowned in Byzantine times as a cure for leprosy and by the Ottomans for syphilis. One Greek legend has it that the city was founded by the leprous daughter of a Byzantine emperor who was miraculously cured after a visit to the hot springs. Fortunately, I am unable to vouch for the accuracy of these claims. What I can attest to, however, is that after a busy day of exploring Bursa, there is nothing better for my spirits than a pleasant couple of hours ➢

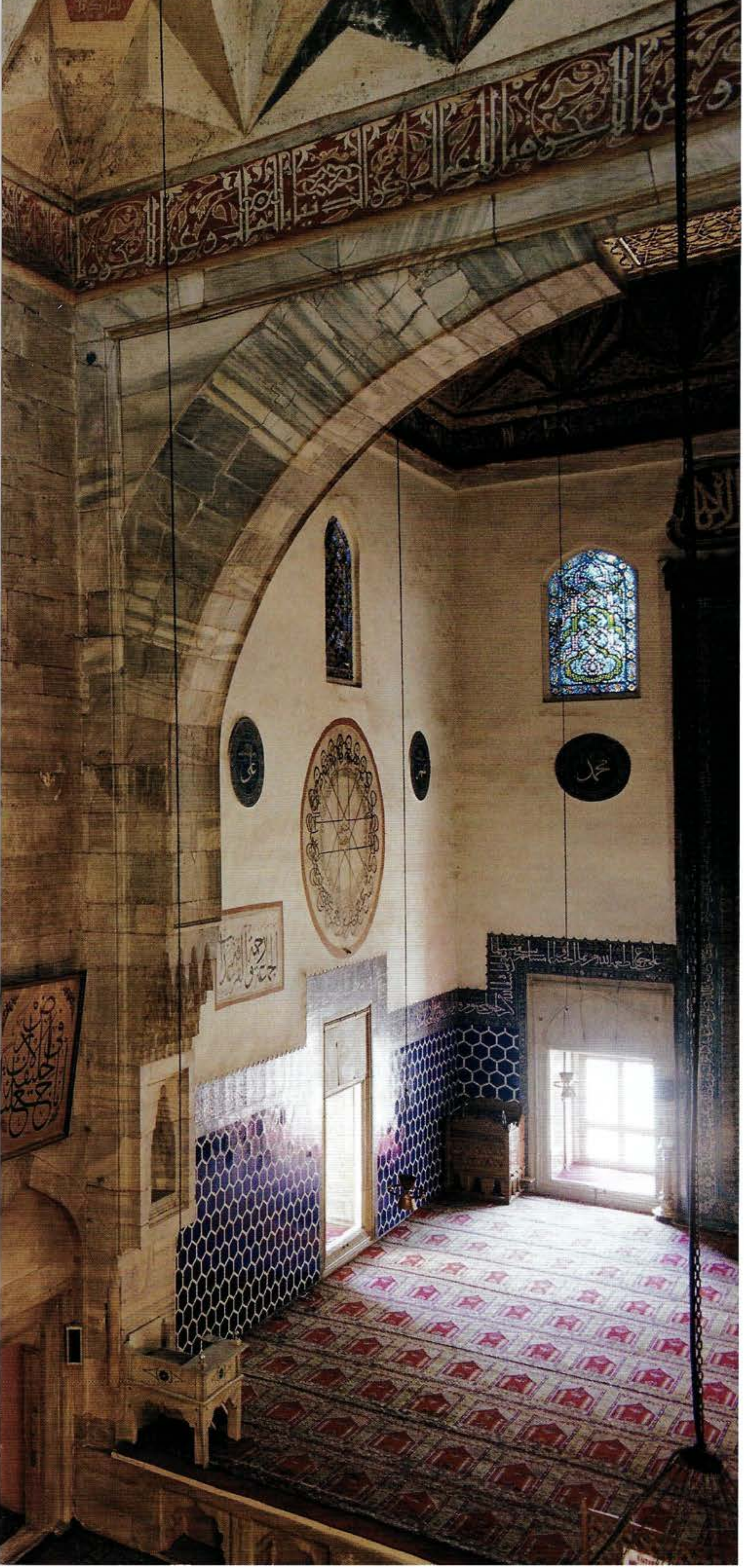
Left: Yildirim Bayezid Camii, completed in 1399 and model for many later mosques. In 1402, Bayezid 'the Thunderbolt', subject of Marlowe's famous play, was defeated by Tamerlane at Ankara. He died of shame, and was buried here



This page and opposite: Mehmed I's mausoleum, the Yeşil Türbe (Green Tomb). Plain hexagonal tiles, more turquoise than green, contrast with the sparkle of the mihrab and sarcophagus (opposite) and of the Timurid cloud-collar arch (this page). The sparkle comes from enamelled tiles made by the 'cuerda seca' technique, akin to mosaic

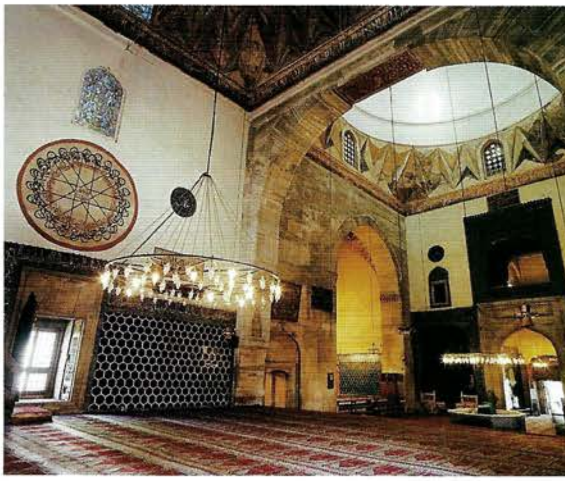


Sturdy masonry sets off the refined tilework and calligraphy on the walls of the Yeşil Cami. It was built on the characteristic Bursa T-plan to unite the roles of mosque, assembly hall and hostel. The sultan in his loggia (opposite, below the dome) could look down from on high



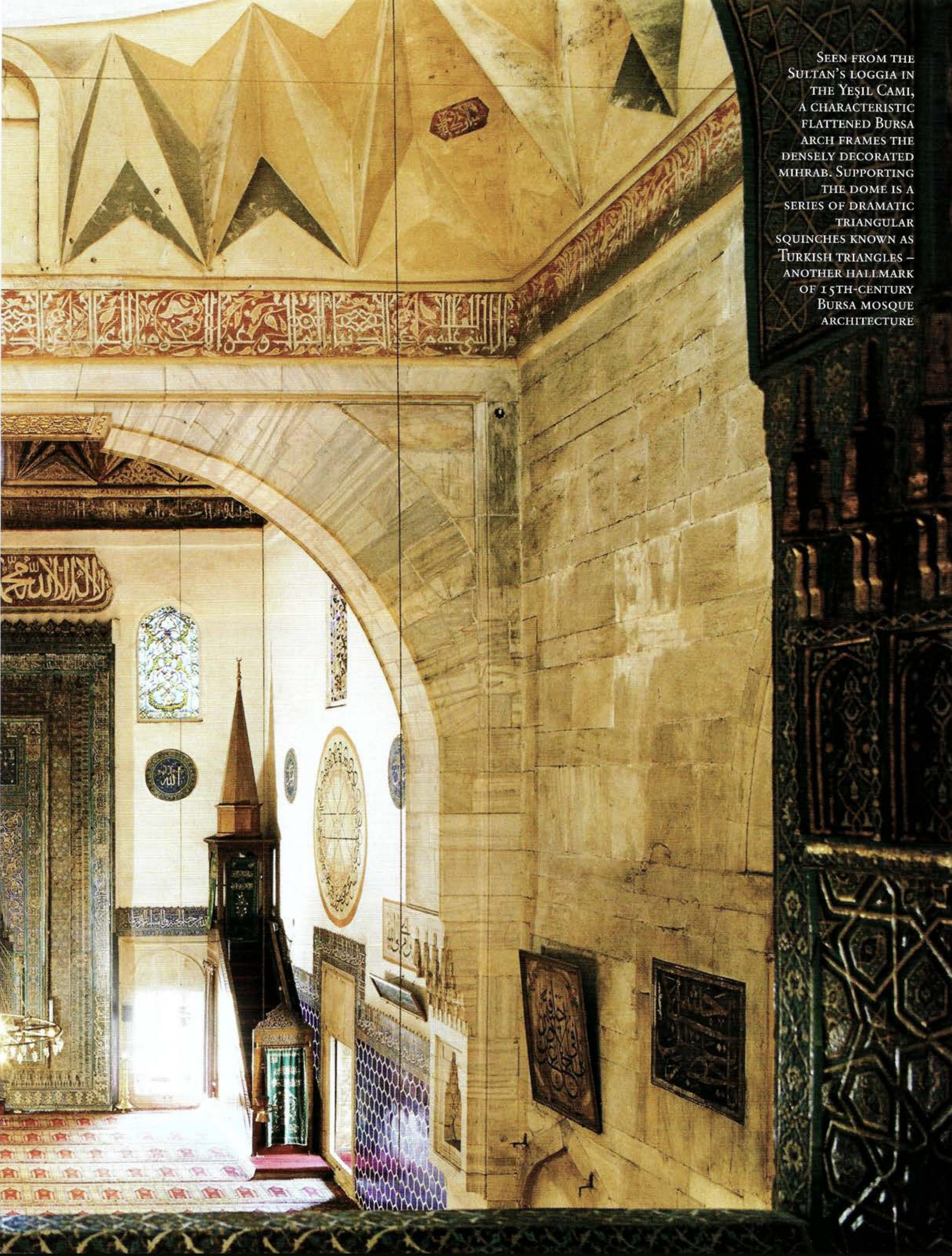
in the Eski Kaplıca. The Kervansaray Termal Hotel forms a U shape round these baths, and one can actually walk directly from the hotel into the baths.

Bursa was conquered following a ten-year siege in 1326 by Orhan Gazi, two years after the death of his father, Osman, to become the first capital of the fledgling Ottoman polity. When the Byzantine official who surrendered the city was asked by the new ruler why they had finally capitulated after holding out so long, he replied: "Your father had taken all our villages, and our former peasants who live in them are happy. We, too, wanted to share that happiness." Therein lay one of the secrets of Ottoman success: good treatment and a fair tax burden (often less than under a strapped and weakened Byzantium) made it possible to rule a population most of whom shared neither the religion, the language nor the culture of their new rulers.

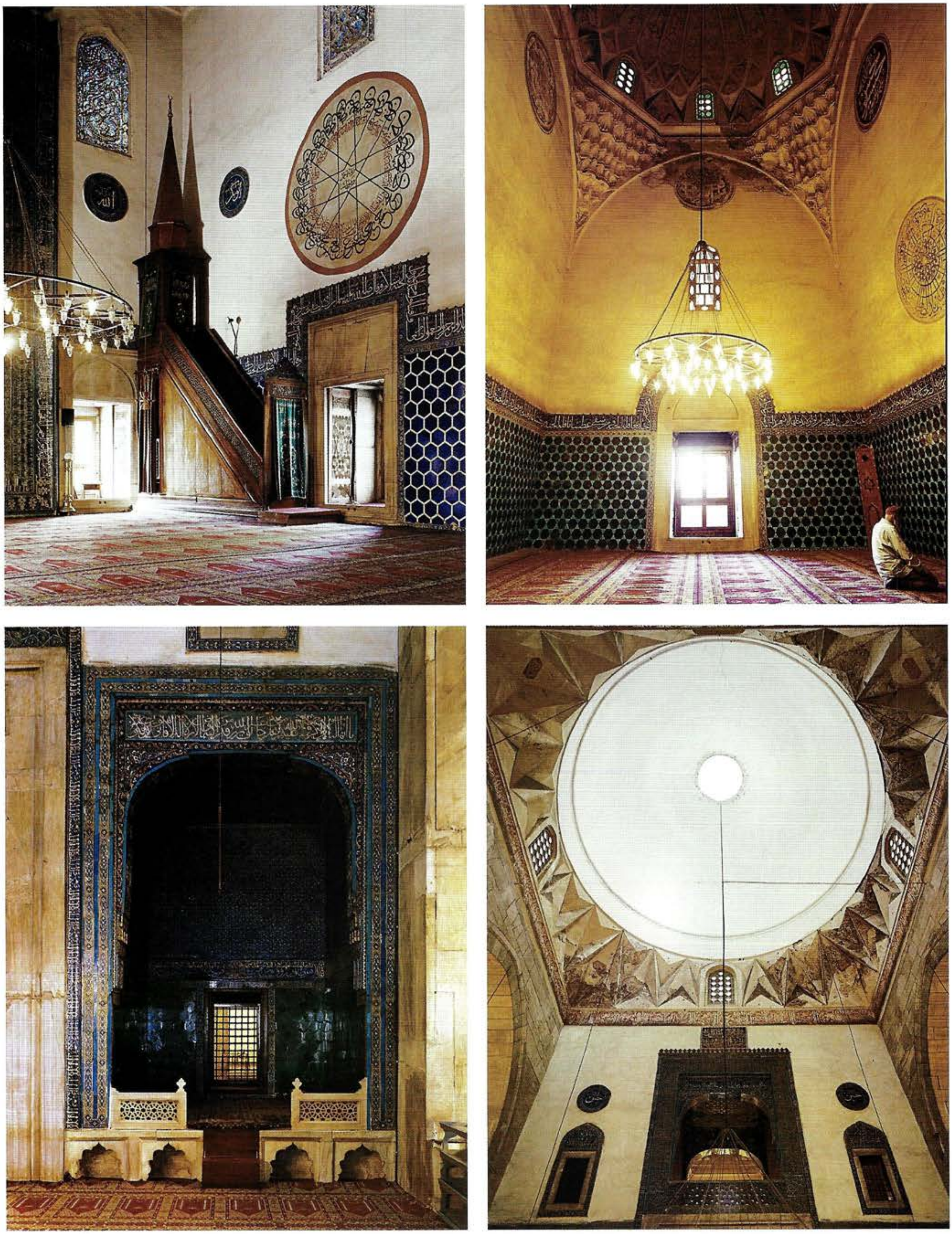


Writing some fifteen years after the fall of Bursa, the Byzantine chronicler Nicepheros Gregoras described the melding of the region's Muslim and Christian populations: "Therein all the Bithynians came together, all the barbarians who were of his [Orhan's] race, and all the *mixobarbaroi* [offspring of mixed Greek and Turkish unions] and in addition all those of our race whom fate forced to serve the barbarians." This must have accounted for the quick conversion of Byzantine "Prusa" into Ottoman "Brusa", and then to the name which has come down today as "Bursa".

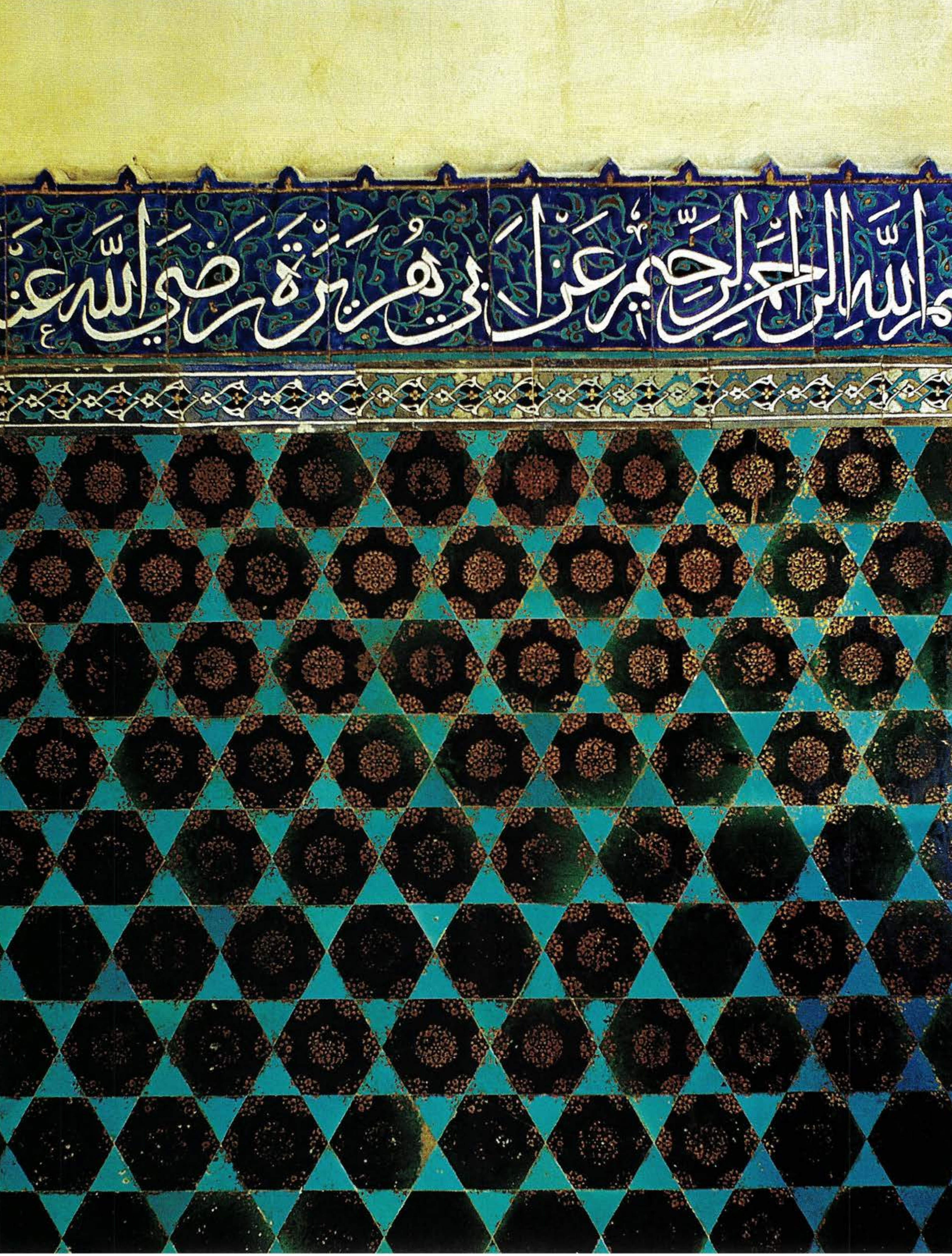
Even after the Ottoman centre moved west, first to Dimetoka and Edirne in the Balkans in the early 1360s, then to Istanbul in 1453, Bursa remained a centre of learning and in many ways ➢

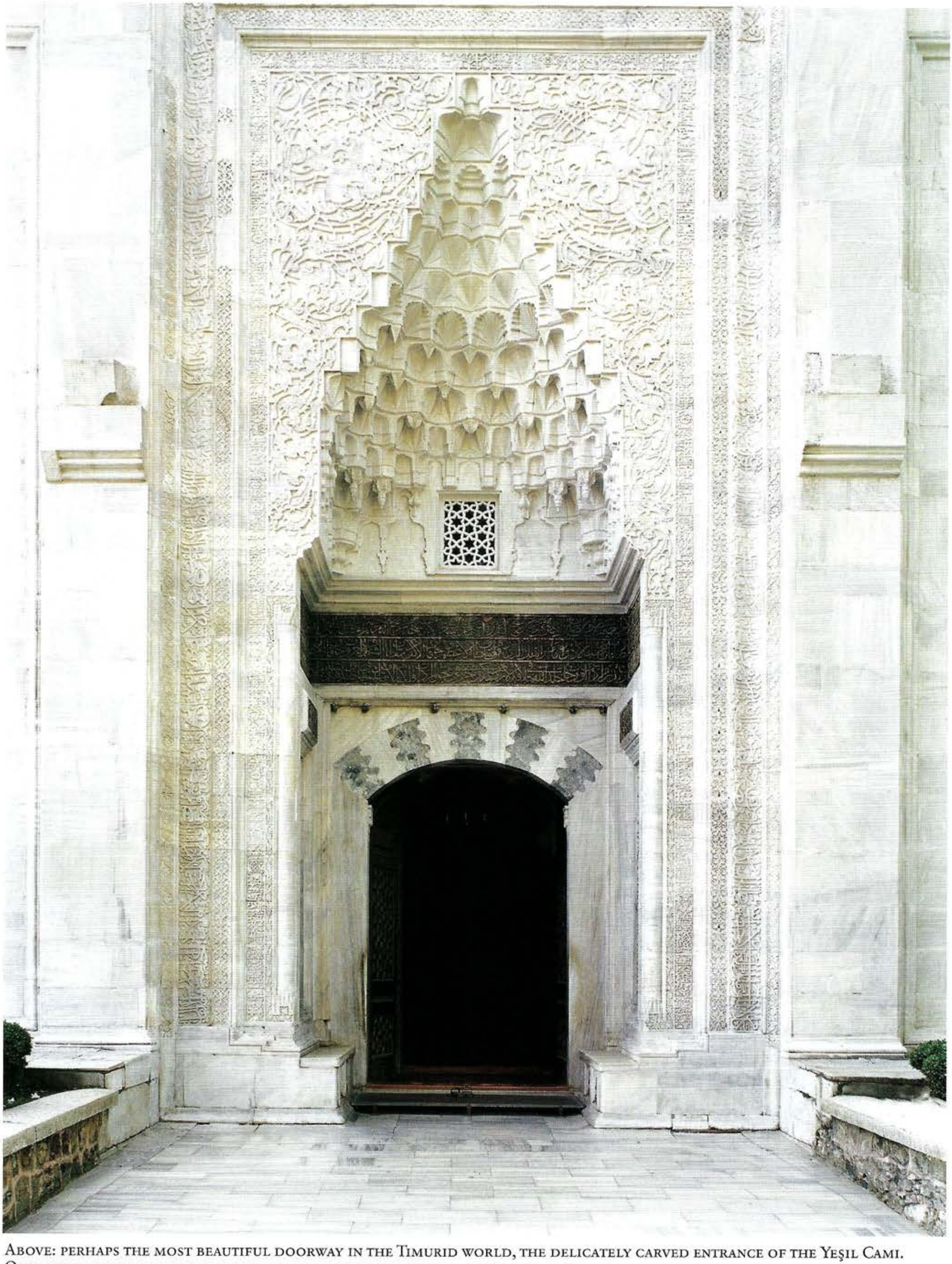


Seen from the Sultan's loggia in the Yeşil Cami, a characteristic flattened Bursa arch frames the densely decorated mihrab. Supporting the dome is a series of dramatic triangular squinches known as Turkish triangles – another hallmark of 15th-century Bursa mosque architecture

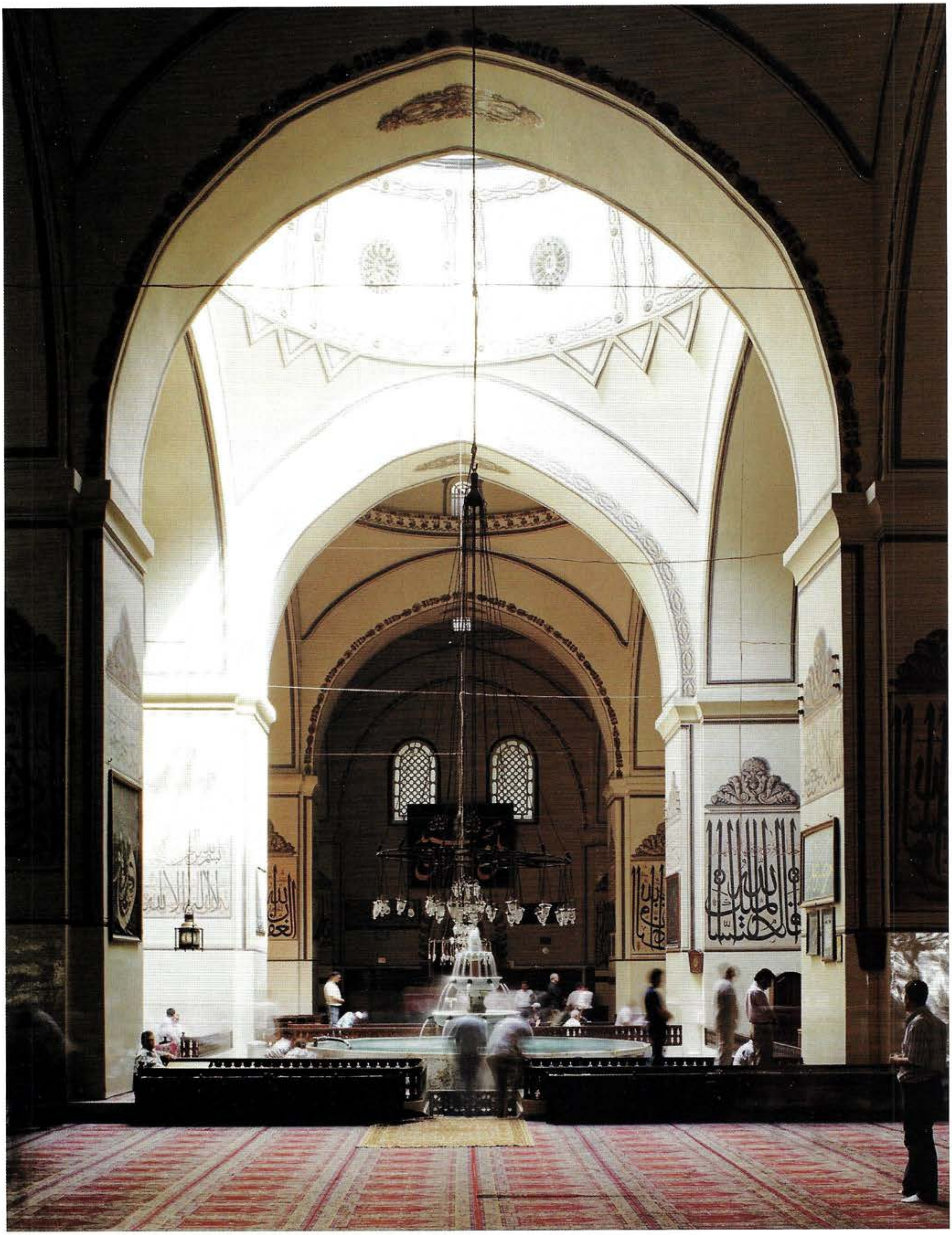


The Yeşil Cami, clockwise from top left: the central sanctuary; a side prayer hall with dark green and turquoise tiles; the sultan's loggia, beneath the dome; a richly tiled alcove. Opposite: a constellation of star-shaped tiles in the loggia

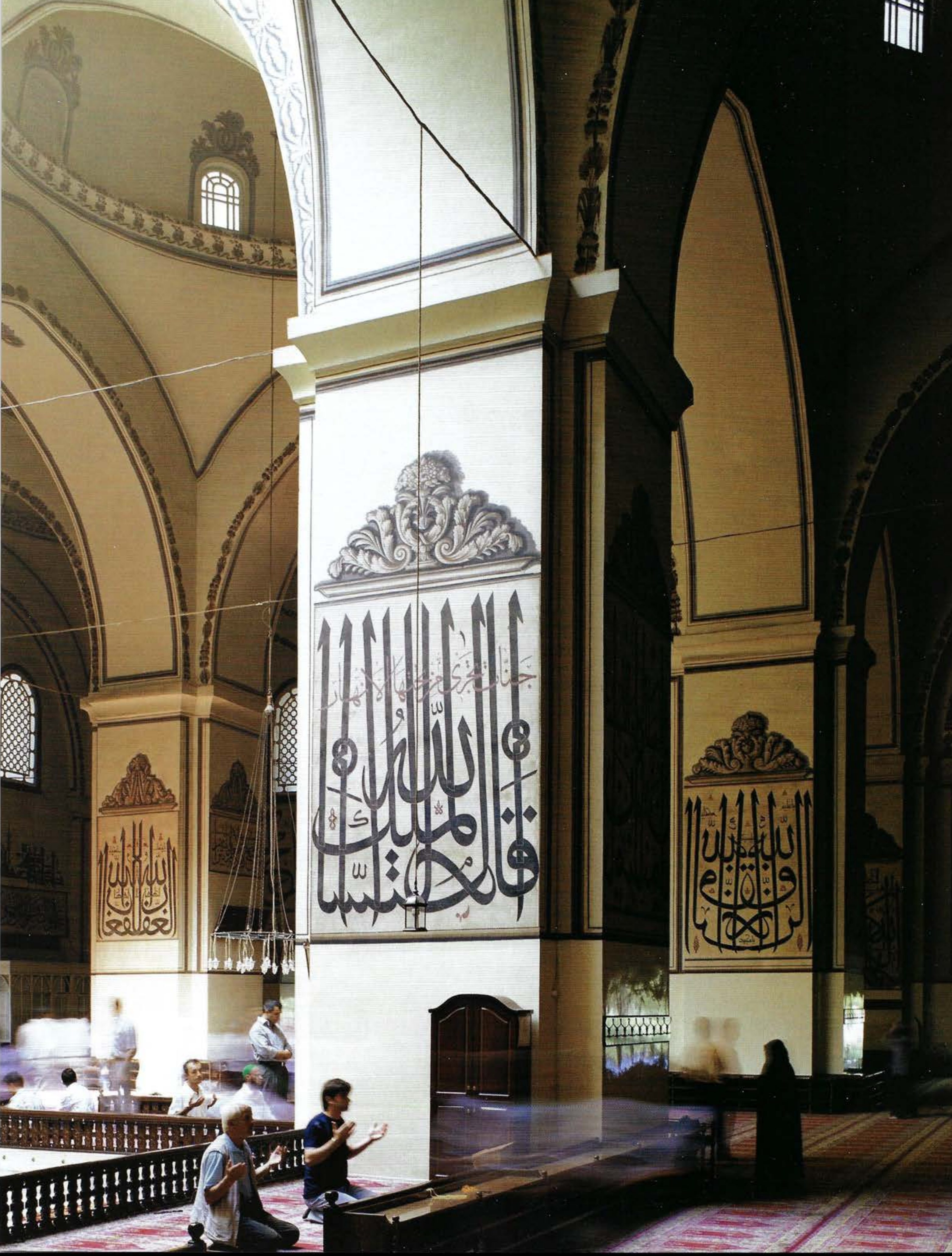

م الله الرحمن الرحيم عن ابي هريرة رضي الله عن

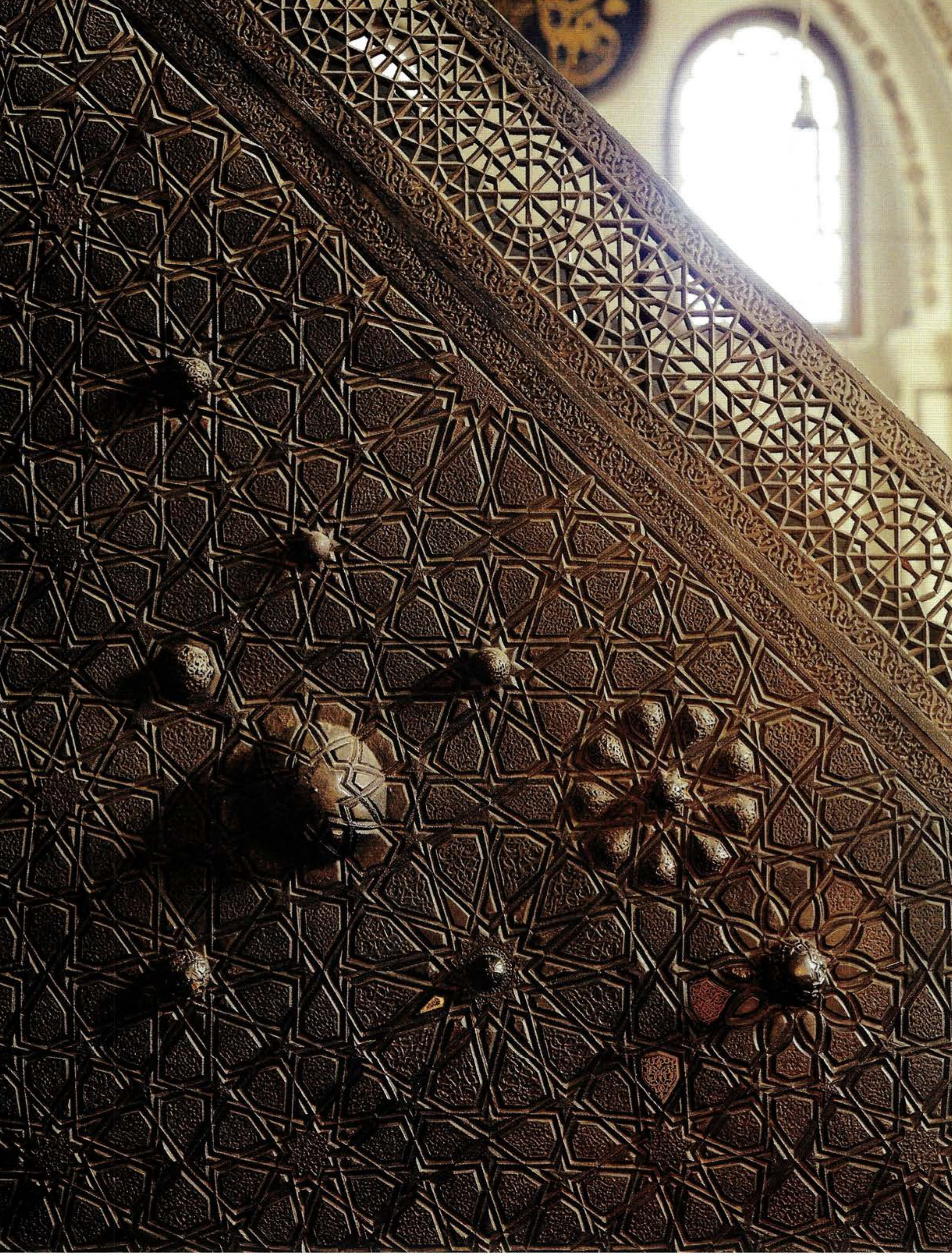


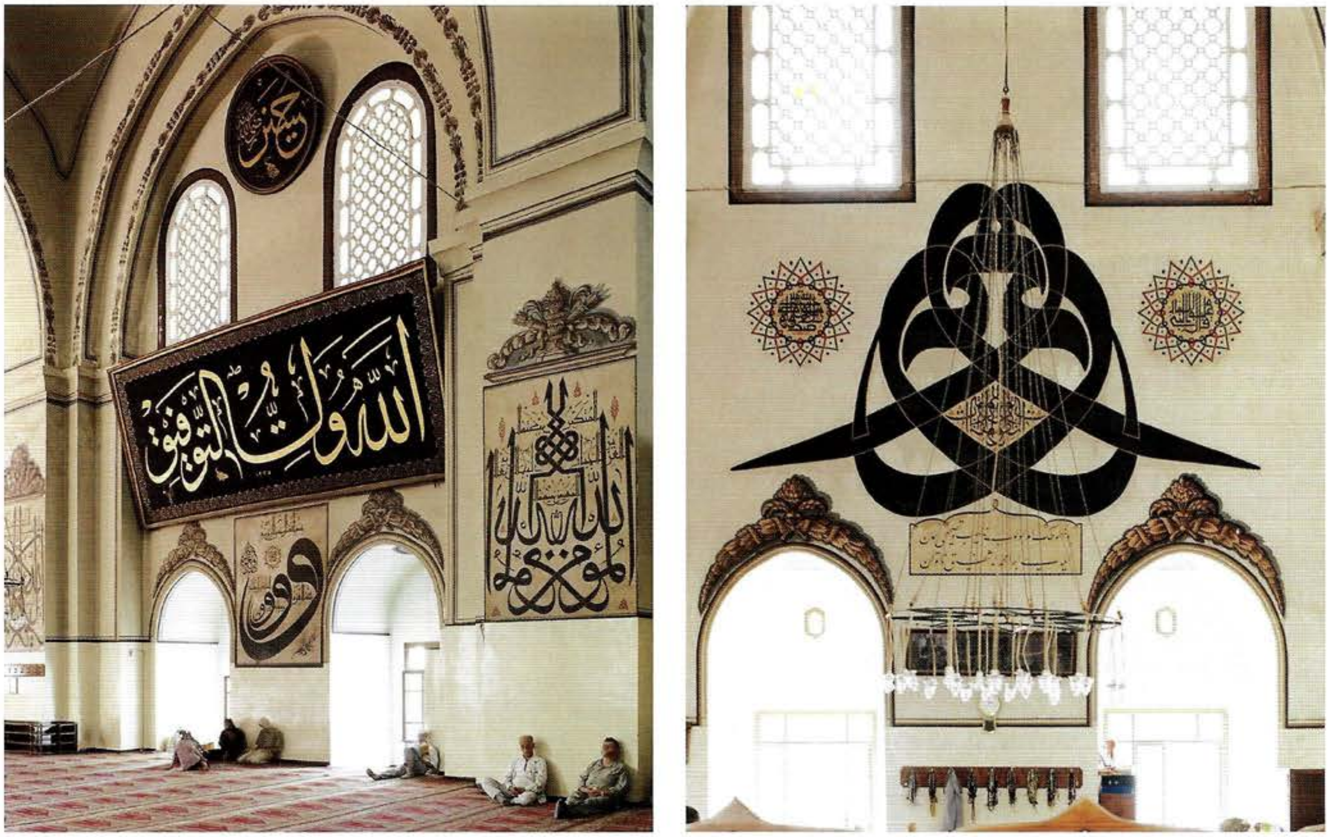
Above: perhaps the most beautiful doorway in the Timurid world, the delicately carved entrance of the Yeşil Cami.
Opposite: a splendid frieze of calligraphic tiles sits above a panel of gilded green hexagons and turquoise triangles



Yildirim Bayezid built the Ulu Cami (Great Mosque) in 1399 after defeating the Crusades. It holds 5000 worshippers beneath its 20 domes of lead. The şadirvan fills the hall with the sound of water. Right: the calligraphy refers to the rivers of Paradise







OPPOSITE: THE ULU CAMI'S 1399 MINBER (PULPIT) WAS CONSTRUCTED IN WALNUT – NO NAILS OR GLUE WERE USED – AND DEPICTS THE PLANETS OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM. LEFT: A HUGE BUT ELEGANT GILDED PANEL, DATED 1859, BY THE MASTER CALLIGRAPHER ŞEFIK. RIGHT: THE LETTER 'VAV', ASSOCIATED WITH AUTHORITY, IS REPEATED FOUR TIMES IN A POWERFUL MIRROR COMPOSITION

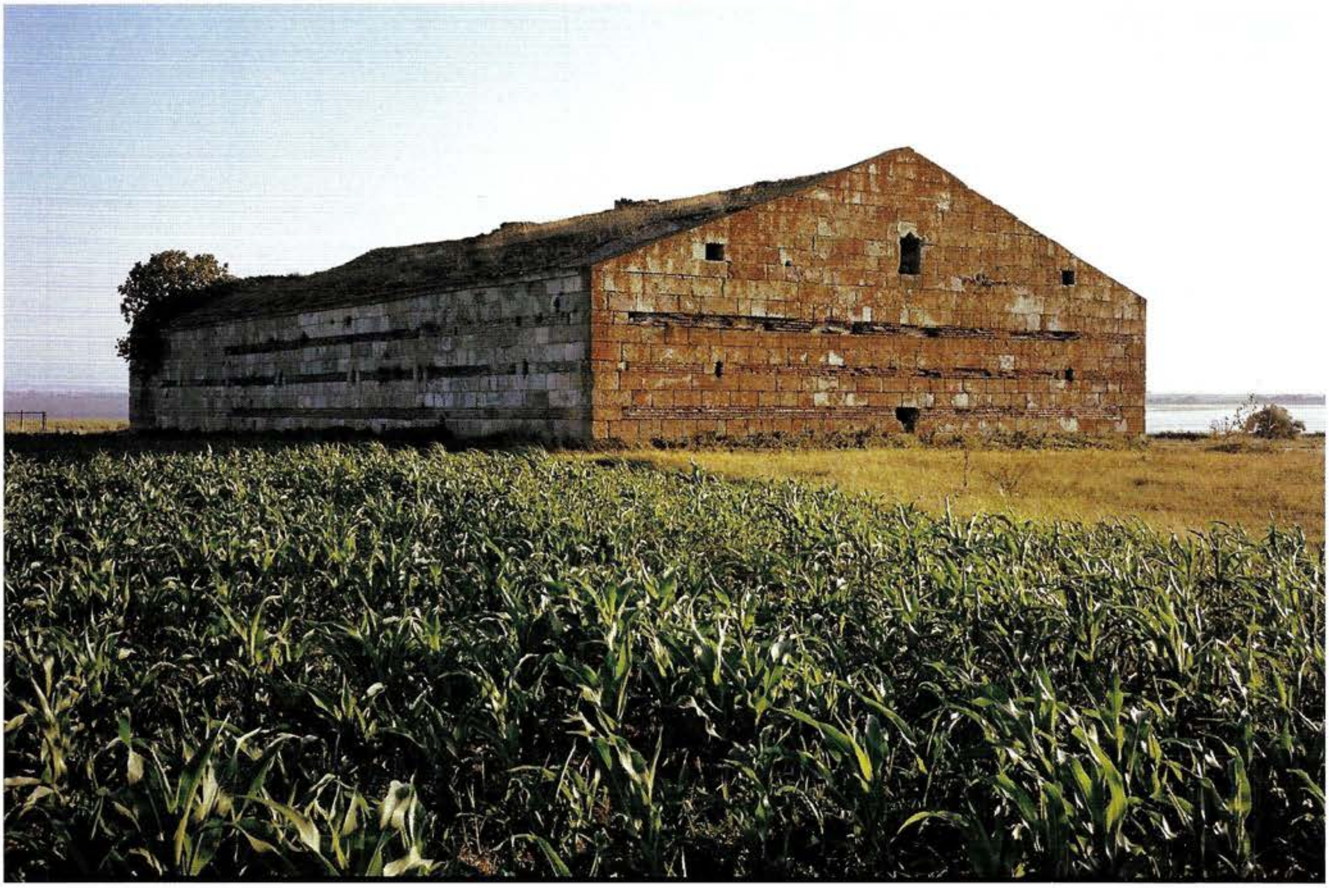
the spiritual core of the state. This is reflected in the large number of surviving *medreses* (theological seminaries), ever-present mosques, and the ornamental *türbes* (domed tombs) of the first six rulers, all of whom were buried in Bursa, and in the signs of royal patronage still evident throughout the city.

Sultanic mosques abound, including the unique twenty-domed Ulu Cami (Great Mosque) built by Yıldırım Bayezid, at the heart of the present-day city. To its east is the Yeşil Cami complex erected by his son Çelebi Mehmed (Mehmed I). To the west, in Çekirge, is the beautiful complex of buildings endowed by his father, Murad Hüdavendigâr. It includes what is today known as the Hüdavendigâr Camii (Ruler's Mosque), which was designed as a multi-purpose building (as were most early Ottoman mosques), containing under one roof a *zaviye* (hostel for dervishes), a *medrese* and the actual sanctuary itself. Next to it still stands the *imaret*, where twice a day those who worked in the complex, students of the *medrese*, dervishes staying at the *zaviye*, travellers (rich and poor) and the local indigent were fed free of charge. No longer in existence is the hospital. In its garden is the tomb of Murad himself and, lower down the hill, the Eski Kaplıca. In the centre of the town once stood an imposing *han*, also endowed by this ruler, as were numerous others built by his descendants (which do survive). In short, here is an encapsulated version of early Ottoman history.

The story it tells is not the one recorded by the sixteenth-century chroniclers, who lived at a time when the dynasty had already achieved its aspiration to be recognised as the successor of the earlier great Sunni (Orthodox) Ummayid, Abbasid and Seljuk empires. As part of that goal the sixteenth-century rulers had fully embraced orthodoxy (this also set them apart from their eastern enemy, the Shii Safavids in Iran), and the early history of their enterprise was conveniently rewritten accordingly.

Far from what they had become by the time these mythologised eulogies were penned, initially the fourteenth-century sultans ruled over a state the overwhelming majority of whose inhabitants were Christians, reflected in the fact that the services of the hospitals and soup kitchens endowed by Murad Hüdavendigâr and other rulers were available to subjects regardless of religion. This largesse impressed several European visitors.

The facilities provided for the Muslim mystics, the dervishes, which included ➢



ISSIZ HAN (LONELY CARAVANSARAY), BUILT IN 1394 ON THE SHORE OF LAKE ULUABAT, 30KM WEST OF BURSA. THE KEY TO OTTOMAN SUCCESS WAS TRADE – CARAVANS WERE OFFERED FREE LODGING, FOOD AND FODDER FOR THREE DAYS. RIGHT: ONE OF THE BUILDING'S GIANT HEARTHS

free lodging in the *zaviyes* and free food in the *imarets*, likewise reflected their key role in conquests of the period. Their spiritual leaders, known as *Babas* (Fathers) or *Sultans* (Rulers), led the Ottoman troops into battle, and it was the moral authority they conferred on early Ottoman rulers that enabled them to maintain the loyalty of the semi-nomadic Turcoman tribesmen whose support was key to early Ottoman success.

It is no coincidence that the oldest Ottoman document to survive is the foundation charter, or *vakfiyye*, drawn up by Orhan Gazi in 1324, endowing a *zaviye* for these wandering mystics, and placing its management in the hands of a converted freed eunuch named Sharaf al-din Muqbil. The document's careful wording (reflecting the fact that the eunuch had no offspring) states that he will be succeeded as administrator of the foundation by the ablest of the children of the Christian slaves who serve the facility. This was the milieu within which Christians and Muslims, slave and free alike, mingled. It was this milieu which served to create the new race of Ottoman Turks, whose heritage is still so visible.

Viewed against this background, the surviving early Ottoman monuments of Bursa take on a special meaning. Their scope and numbers are truly impressive, even more so when we factor in the series of man-made and natural disasters of the past half millennium. Three times Muslim armies occupied, looted and burnt up half the city (Tamerlane's army in 1403, the forces of Karamani Mehmed in 1413 and the rebels known as the Celalis in 1609–12). Earthquakes, always a bane in Bithynia (which lies across a major fault line), frequently took their toll as well. Fires, a perennial problem in a city whose residences were built primarily of lath and plaster, frequently ravaged whole quarters. Finally, in the twentieth century, the rejection of everything Ottoman in the new Republic of Turkey meant the destruction or neglect of monuments that stood as silent reminders of the past one was not supposed to remember. What is amazing is less how much is gone than how much has survived. No visitor to Turkey can ever really gain a feel for the wonders of the Ottoman past without a visit to Bursa. ◆

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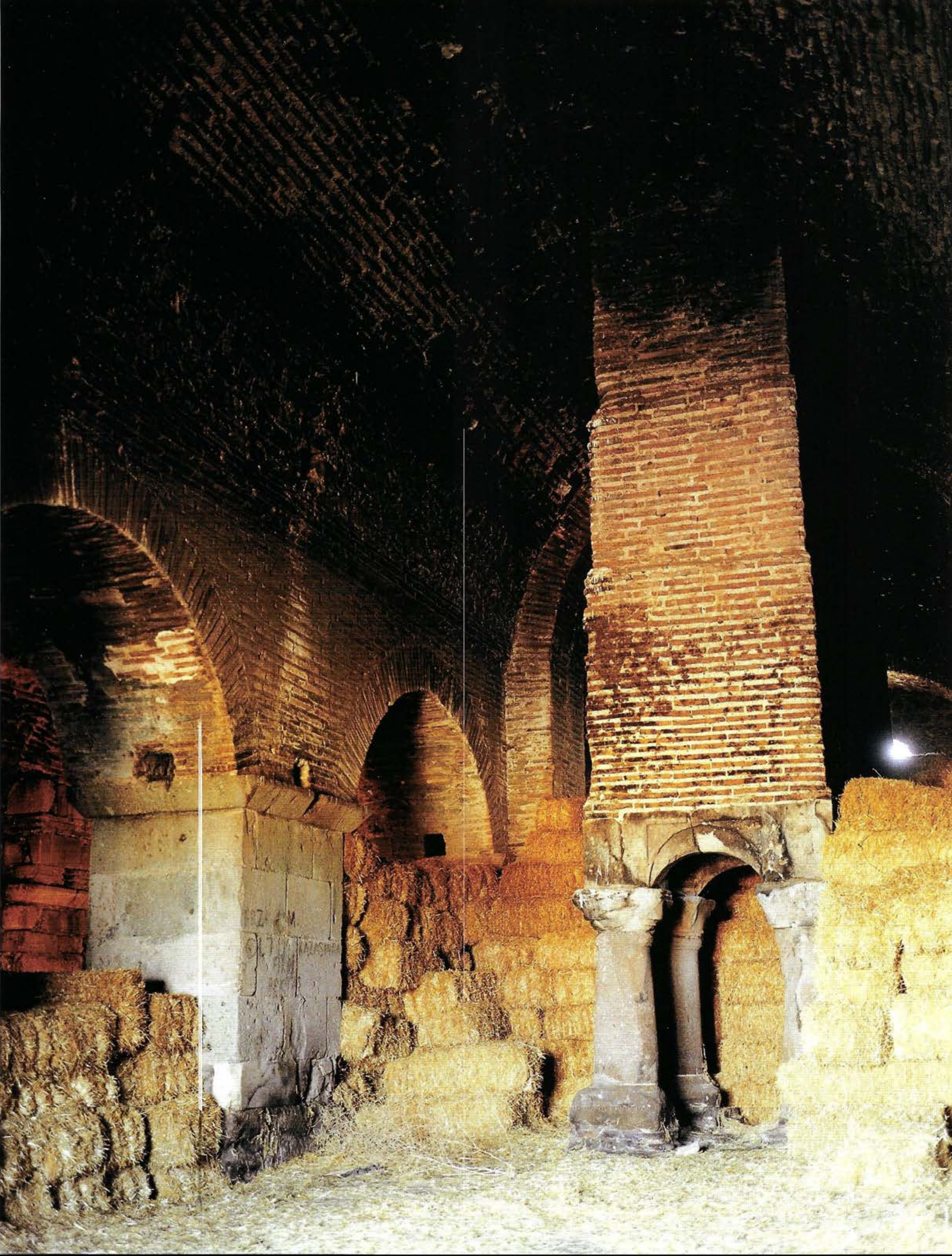


JOHN CARSWELL

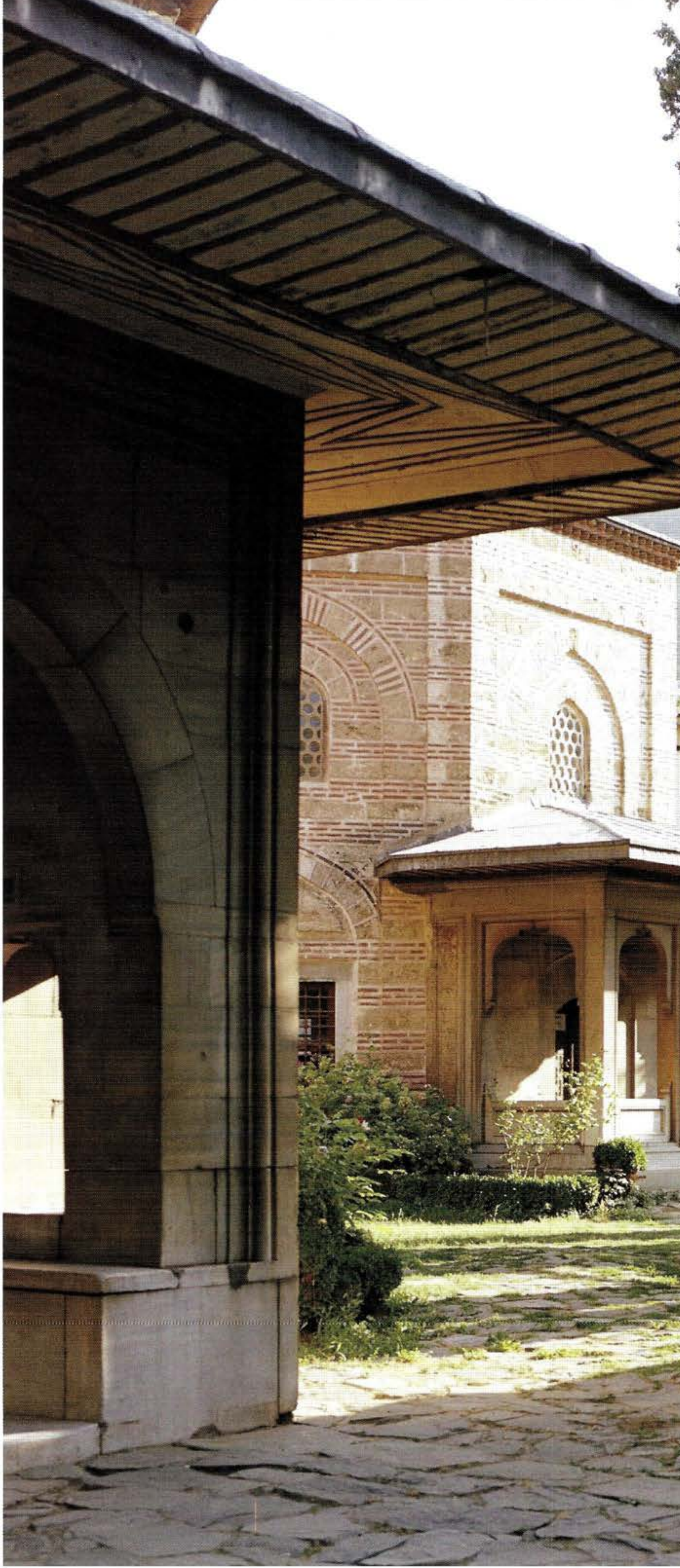
WHISTLESTOP BURSA: A DAY OUT ON THE TILES

Bursa owes its wealth to commerce, being at the western extremity of a network of caravan routes stretching all the way to Central Asia and China. In the other direction, it was the outlet for goods whose destination was Europe, and had particularly strong links with Italy. As a manufacturing centre, it was famous for its silks and velvets, supplying not only the Ottoman court but also vestments and altar cloths for ecclesiastical patrons which are now in treasuries as far afield as Russia and Mount Athos.

Initially, Bursa's prosperity derived from the sale and export of raw silk, and it did not come into its own as a producer of silken cloth until the late fifteenth century, by which time over 1,000 looms are recorded. The cultivation of the silkworm came even later, and the first mulberry plantations for the leaves to feed them in the late sixteenth century. The earlier dependency on raw silk from Iran was a cause for concern, pitting the Ottomans against the Safavids in the effort to secure this commodity.

On a swift visit this spring, it was Tulip Time in Istanbul when we left, proclaimed by the Mayor of the city after he had planted eight million tulips to encourage the propagation of Turkey's national flower throughout the country. Leaving the army of scarlet tulips behind, we drove over the bridge to Asia and swung south to the ferry terminal at Eskihisar to cross the Sea of Marmara.

On the road again and over the mountains, we passed a roadside stand selling model storks, then took a detour left to Iznik, through flowering orchards of apples and cherries, and vines pruned a metre high. "Town" is ➢



THE ROMANTIC MURADIYE CEMETERY, RESTING PLACE OF MURAD II, WHO DIED IN 1451. THE OTHER TWELVE TOMBS WERE FOR RELATIONS AND FAMILY RETAINERS. HIS SON MEHMET THE CONQUEROR BUILT THE OPEN TÜRBE IN THE CENTRE FOR HIS MIDWIFE, EBE HATUN

The Koza Han, a caravansaray once devoted to the sale of silk cocoons, is now a breezy teashop with bamboo tables under Coca-Cola parasols and ancient plane trees

probably too grand a word for Iznik; it might more accurately be described as an extended village within the ancient walls. The houses are humble, and the shops sell useful things like rope, plastic buckets and gas bottles. It is all very peaceful, with rich agricultural land surrounding the lake, which laps quietly away among the reeds lining its shores.

We quickly inspected the museum – full of dusty sherds from excavations twenty years ago – the early mosque and the minaret of the notable saint Eşrefzade, but Bursa was our objective, not Iznik, and we sped off at top speed around alarming S-bends, through villages with mansions of timber-framed brick and stone in a style one might christen Turkish Tudor.

Bursa was swathed in an ominous grey gloom, getting colder and wetter by the minute, in sharp contrast to the brilliant blue sky and warmth of Tulip Town the day before. We approached it through the stranglehold of the new industrial zone. Bursa is no longer famous for weaving silken cloth and velvets. The death blow, I am told, was the establishment of an artificial silk industry at the port of Gemlik to the north. This so polluted the atmosphere that it even killed the chestnut trees which produced the *kestane şekeri (maron glacé)* for which Bursa is renowned. A measure of the city's prosperity is a standing order for 20,000 taxis from the United States next year.

At first glance the centre seems to suggest a provincial city, but Bursa is not provincial and never has been. Since Roman times there has been a continuing tradition of foreign trade, with all the cultural influences that this has brought from east and west alike.

Crossing the dangerously bustling main street from the Green Crocodile Otopark, where we had disposed of our car, our first visit was to the Ulu Cami (1396–9), begun during the reign of Yıldırım Bayezıd. This monumental structure combines twenty domes supported on massive piers in rows of five. The entrances are on three sides and lead to a marble pool beneath a once-open oculus. Here sunlight streamed down on a faithful boy praying towards the mihrab. Much of the southeast area of the building is being restored and was sheathed in green and blue plastic; the minber was temporarily concealed. From behind the plastic came mysterious clanking noises of scaffolding being shuffled around.

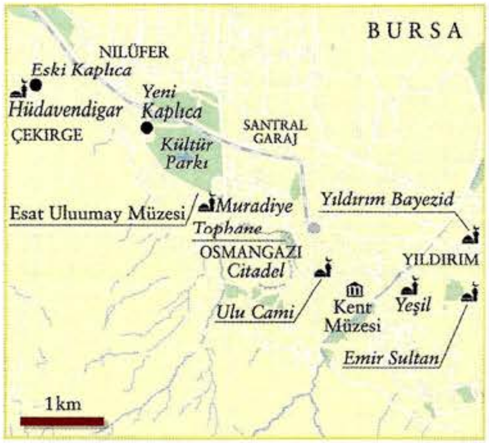
The purity of the mosque's plan is offset by dramatic black calligraphic designs on the walls and piers belonging to the period of Abdülmecid's restoration in the nineteenth century. Many of these are symmetrical designs with mirror images of the inscriptions. The Koran is boldly proclaimed in a style as rigid and emphatic as the building itself.

One of these calligraphic panels resembles bent swords, as if the name of Allah has been twisted into an icon. Another is a tunnel-like perspective of diminishing Arabic vowels. And a third is a dense intertwining of curving scimitar-like slashes. Outside, the minaret has a carved stone base with faceted squinches, like a capital set upside down.

From there we descended into the heart of the medieval bazaar, where all the great hans are located, each dedicated to a particular commodity. The shops were all glittering gold jewellery, artificial silk and cotton bath towels. Then up into the Koza (Silk) Han, built in 1489 with massive carved stone plaits framing the entrance. This caravansaray, once devoted to the sale of silk cocoons, is now a breezy teashop with bamboo tables under Coca-Cola parasols and ancient plane trees. At the centre is the original octagonal two-storey *mescid* (small mosque), reached up a steep stone staircase. Here you nest in the leafy tops of the plane trees.

From there it is a short walk to the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Orhan Camii. The simple, squat interior has a T-shaped plan, now heavily restored with painted ceilings under its four domes. There are faint traces of earlier painted decoration in the mihrab niche.

We arrived at the Muradiye cemetery, a leafy glade with peonies all in bloom, and



SUSANNA HICKLING

THE DOMED MESCID, OR SMALL MOSQUE, OF THE KOZA HAN. THE TOP FLOOR IS A PRAYER HALL, AND BELOW IS AN OPEN FOUNTAIN, BOTH STILL IN USE. THEY ARE AT THE VERY CENTRE OF THE HAN, BUILT IN 1491 ON THE ORDERS OF BAYEZID II, WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN THRONGED WITH TRAVELLERS

türbes in all directions. Today these domed mausoleums are all carefully labelled, so it is easy to detect who is buried where. First we visited Şehzade Ahmet, who died in 1513. The second son of Bayezıd II, he lies in an octagonal türbe lined with friezes of turquoise and dark blue hexagons, and delicate borders of underglaze blue and white tiles. There are six marble cenotaphs, with Şehzade Ahmet closest to the mihrab, then his sister Sofu, his two sons and, off to one side, his mother, Bülbül (Nightingale), and his daughter Kamer (Moon).

The türbe was erected by Selim I, and its decoration reflects the fundamental changes brought about by the conquest of Syria and Egypt in 1517. Much of the booty brought back to Istanbul was Chinese blue-and-white porcelain, and its impact on Ottoman art was immediate. Here it is reflected in the blue-and-white border tiles, whose designer must have taken a careful look at the Chinese patterns.

Nearby is the türbe of Murad II, the last Ottoman sultan to reign in Bursa. His memorial was erected by his son, Mehmet the Conqueror, who captured Constantinople in 1453 just two years after Murad's death. Indeed, the whole Muradiye complex was conceived by him, including a mosque, a medrese and a hamam. Murad II's türbe is open at the top, so that sacred rainwater can fall on the tomb. It is of square plan, with squinch arches supporting the dome, and inverted capitals used as bases for the supporting columns. The floor is of humble terracotta hexagons. To one side is an annexe containing the tombs of Murad's three sons, Alaeddin, Ahmet and Orhan, and his daughter Şehzade Hatun.

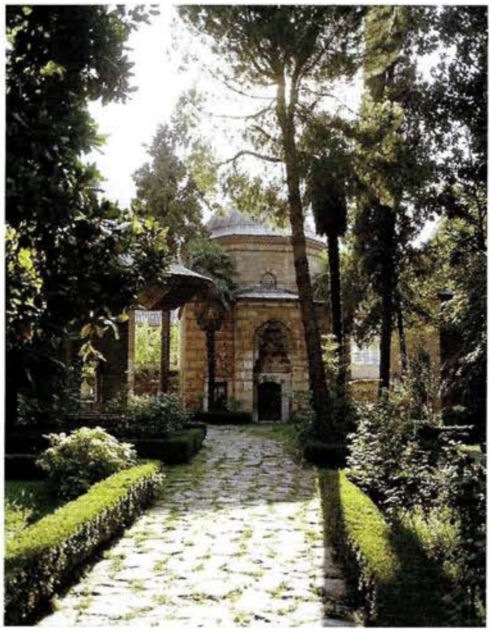
By now it was raining hard, and we took shelter in the Uluumay Museum of Ottoman Folk Costumes and Jewellery close by, leaving the rest of the tombs for tomorrow. Esat Uluumay, a native of Bursa, is a man of many parts, as we were to find out. In his youth he was a fervent folk-dancer, which led to an equal passion for folk art and the formation of his unique collection of costumes and jewellery. All this has been brought together in his own museum, which opened just three years ago in a restored *medrese* (theological school). The core collection consists of costumes, with sensors so that when you enter each room the figures magically begin to rotate. The collection is not confined to Bursa, but contains important material from all over Turkey and the Balkans. The costumes are supplemented by jewellery, embroidery, various knick-knacks and even farm implements, all under the curatorship of the enormously knowledgeable and ever-present Mr Uluumay himself.

It was now late in the day, and we retreated to the Gönlüferah Hotel in Çekirge. We relaxed in splendour with our own private hamams, and after a decent dinner went early to bed.

The next day the sun was out, and after a quick walk from the hotel our first stop was the Hüdavendigâr Camii, built by Murad I between 1365 and 1385. Approaching the mosque on foot, one is overwhelmed by the height of the portico, which is surmounted by an even higher arcade of twin arches. The effect is not unlike the façade of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem before Sultan Süleyman's restoration in the sixteenth century. Indeed the influence of the Umayyad building on medieval Muslim and Christian pilgrims cannot be overestimated.

At present the Hüdavendigâr Camii (the name means the Ruler's Mosque) is under restoration and encapsulated in a nest of wooden scaffolding and electric cables, the minber swathed Christo-like in dusty plastic. In spite of all the temporary scaffolding, one is immediately struck inside by the terrific height of the dome above the fountain. Indeed the first impression is of a great ➢

Right: the domed tomb of Bayezid II's wife Gülruh Sultan, who died in 1502, and their daughter Kamer. Opposite: the tomb of Bayezid II's brothers Şehzade Mustafa and Cem Sultan, his bitter rival, who died in Italy. The building is notable for having the earliest known Iznik tiles – the blue and white ones at the centre of the arches above the ground-floor windows. The dome was probably open when it was built in 1499



cathedral rather than a mosque, with the focus on the recessed mihrab – where the altar might have been. To either side of the fountain, the wings of the T-shaped plan are abbreviated to twin stumps.

We climbed up to the first-floor gallery, with a good view down on the distant mihrab through the workmen's cables. A dusty book was tucked into the chandelier. On this level, the cells of the medrese are concealed and extend on either side to the rear of the building. At the front there is a splendid view over the plain of Bursa from the upper arcade with its twin columns. And across the road is the türbe of Murad I (d.1389), a simple dome supported by four massive piers and columns, with his tomb at the centre skewed towards Mecca.

An Englishman who visited the baths in the seventeenth century, Dr John Covel, noted that "at its first issuing out, [the water] is so hot we boyl'd egges in it"

Following from one volcanic spring to another, we returned to the Muradiye complex to complete our tour. First of all we visited the mosque of Murad II (1424–6). Again it is based on a T-shaped plan, with the central dome supported by a network of squinches. Standing immediately beneath the dome, you can hear the air eerily circulating above. Three walls of the mosque are lined with stunning hexagonal tiles, and framed with narrow *cuerda seca* borders. Outside, under the portico, are equally impressive tiles in the arches above the windows in variations of the Timurid style with cloud-collar panels. These are all executed in tile mosaic, with brilliantly coloured tiles sawn and fitted together like a jigsaw puzzle.

Back in the royal cemetery, brilliant sunshine danced among the tall cypresses and the trim box hedges, with peonies and roses for accents. The first *türbe* we entered was the resting place of Cem Sultan (d.1474), lined with turquoise and dark blue hexagons and gold decoration. The underglaze blue border tiles were of the same design as those in the Murad II Mosque we had just visited, and at the centre of the lunettes above the windows were single hexagonal tiles, all different and all decorated in underglaze colours.

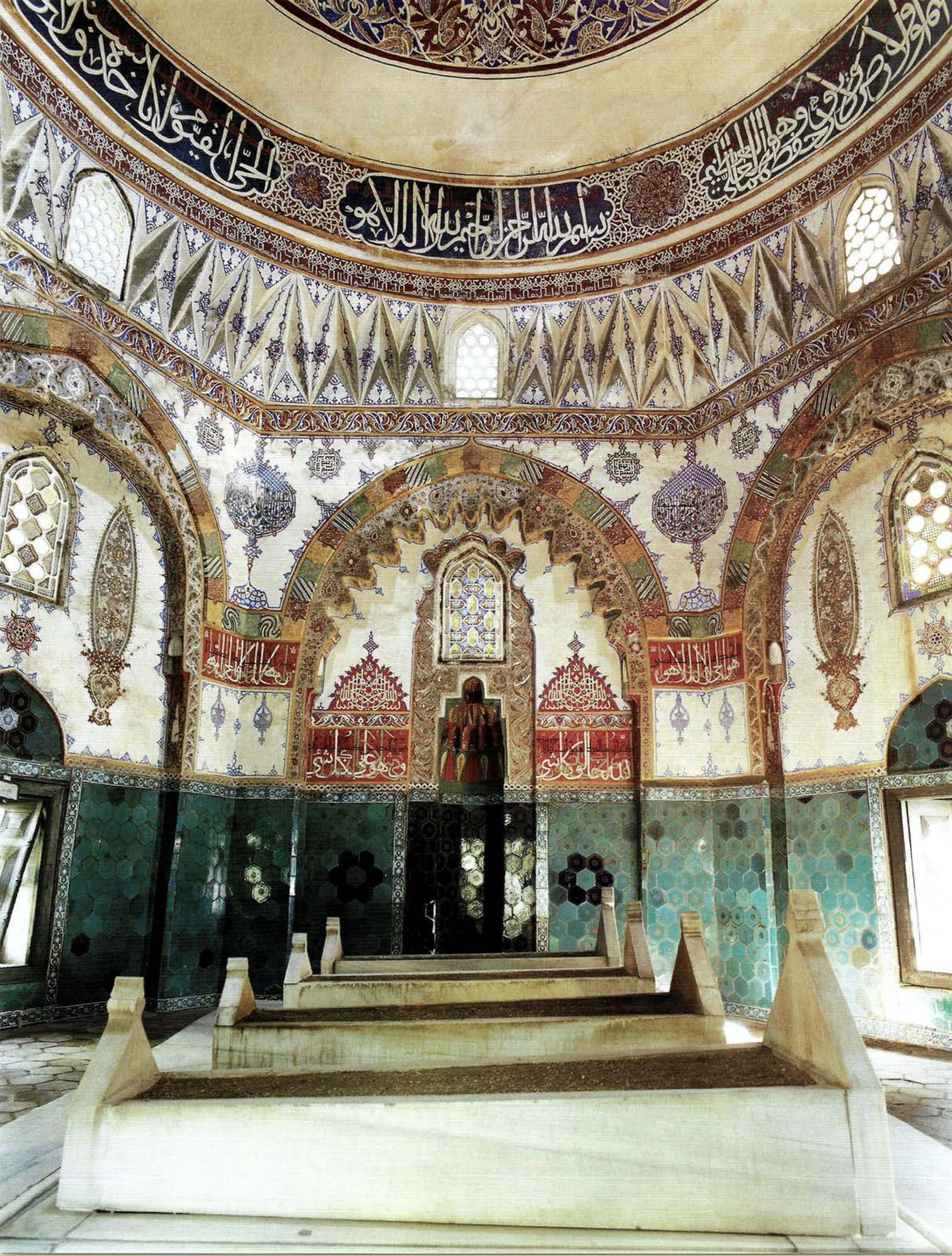
Next on the list was the türbe of Şehzade Mustafa, who died in 1553, the eldest son of Süleyman the Magnificent. I was struck by the tiles, which were decorated in underglaze colours including red in relief, with tulips, hyacinths and other hybrid flowers usually associated with a later period of Iznik ware. But the anomaly was explained when I learned that the türbe was built by his brother Selim II in 1573, twenty years after Mustafa's death. Above the tiles was a wonderful inscription on a blue ground running right round the interior of the *türbe*. Rosettes and sprays of flowers jumped around the stately calligraphy.

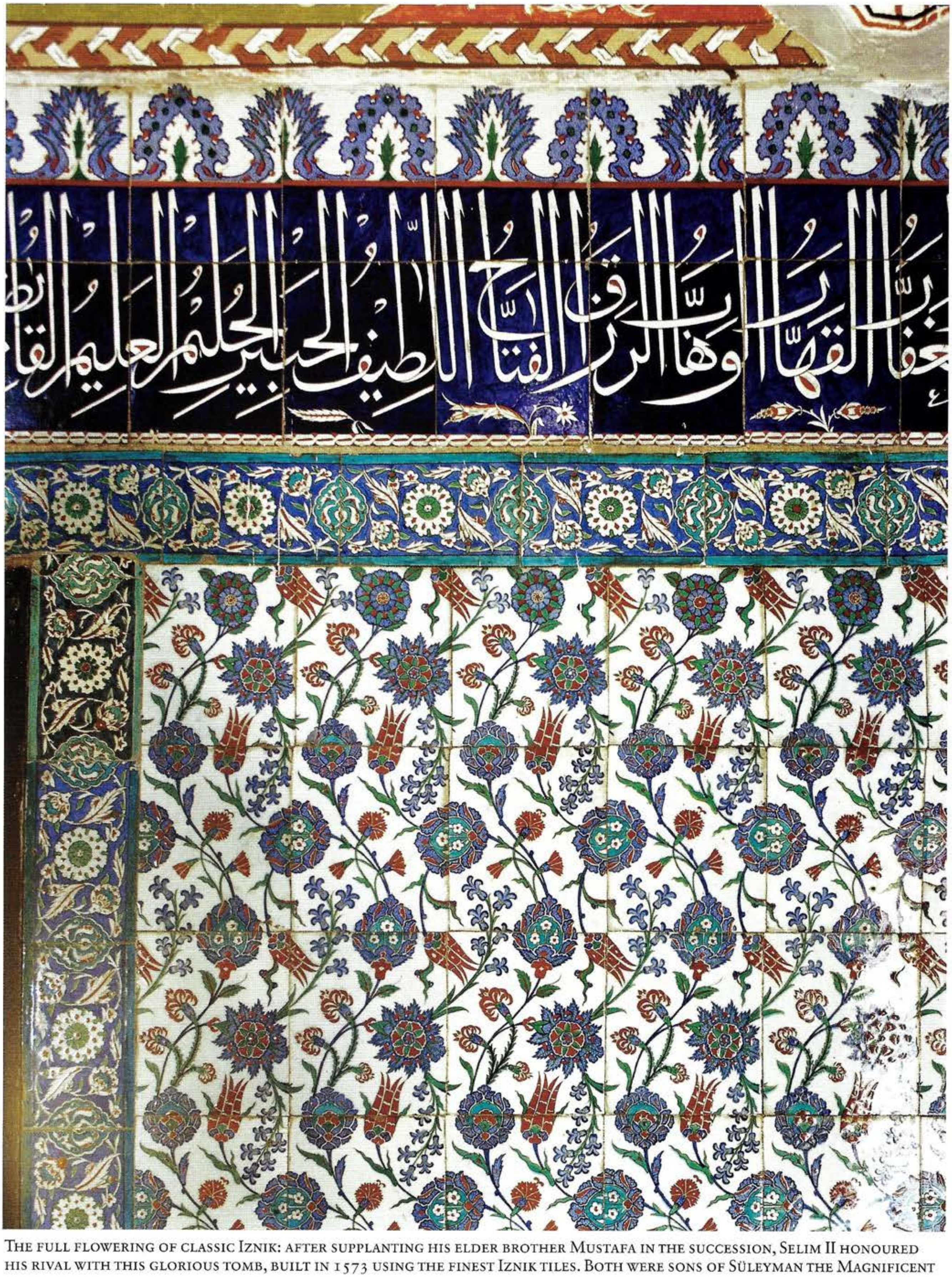
Finally we saw the türbe of Şehzade Mahmut, son of Bayezid II, who died in 1506. Here the tiles of dark blue and turquoise hexagons were painted with gold borders and medallions. The blue-and-white border tiles were decorated with knotted patterns and arabesques, with plain white scalloped medallions at intervals, a few of which still had traces of additional gold decoration.

We drove back from the cemetery towards Çekirge, to visit another, more vivacious world. The Yeni Kaplıca baths have been supplied since at least Byzantine times by a spring of naturally scalding-hot water. Ibn Battuta, the renowned Arab traveller, who was in Bursa in the early fourteenth century shortly after the Ottoman conquest, stated: "In its outskirts there is a river of exceedingly hot water which flows into a large pond; besides this have been built two [bath] houses, one for men and the other for women. Sick persons seek a cure in this hot pool and come to it from the most distant parts of the country."

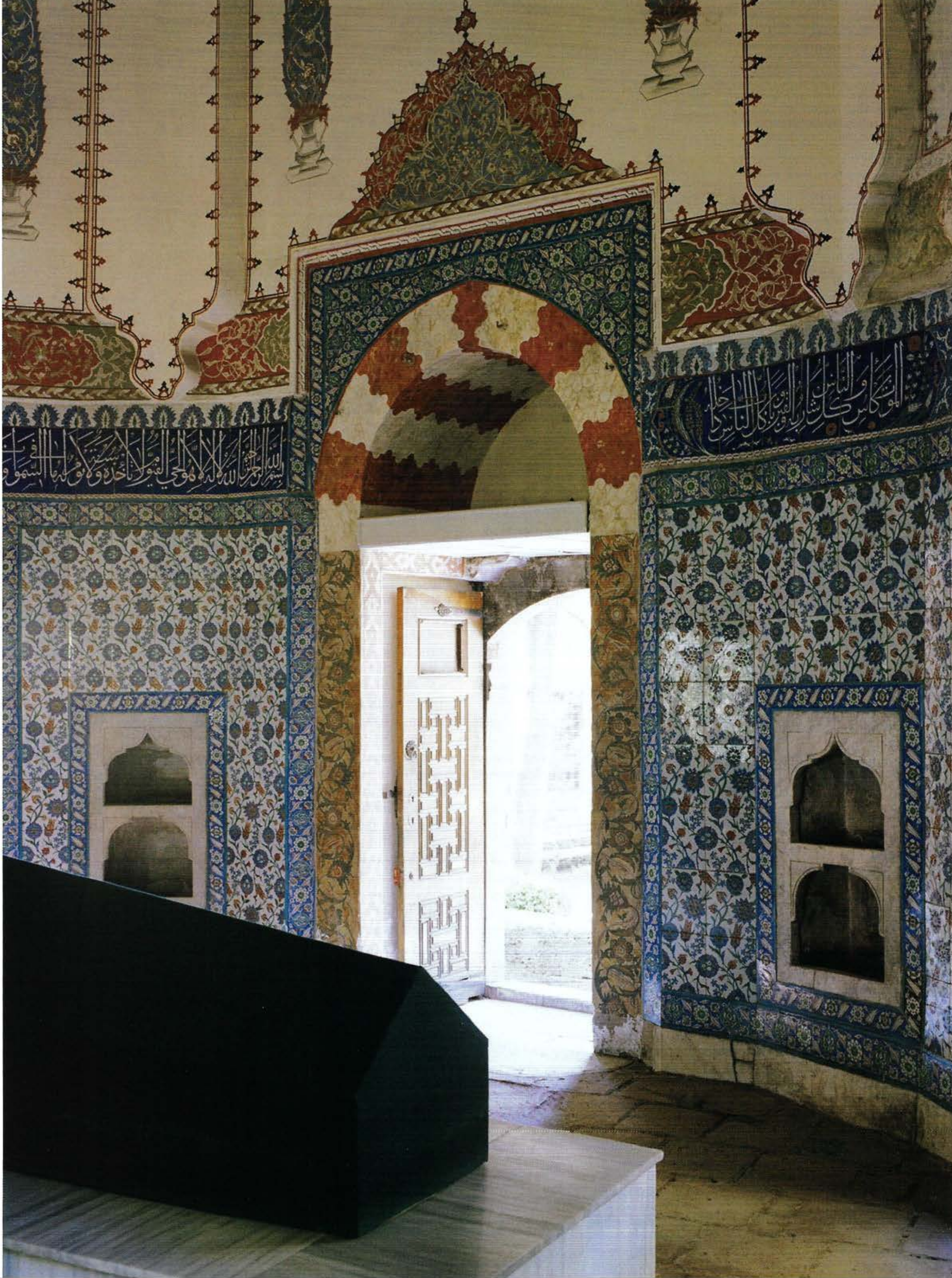
An Englishman who visited the baths in the seventeenth century, Dr John Covel, noted that "at its first issuing out, [the water] is so hot we boyl'd egges in it". And it was so sulphurous, he observed, that the water furred everything with a yellow, sandy grit. Today, as a result, the hundreds of sixteenth-century tiles that line the Yeni Kaplıca have almost entirely lost their glaze.

But the baths have never lost their popularity, and when we arrived they ➢





THE FULL FLOWERING OF CLASSIC IZNIK: AFTER SUPPLANTING HIS ELDER BROTHER MUSTAFA IN THE SUCCESSION, SELIM II HONOURED HIS RIVAL WITH THIS GLORIOUS TOMB, BUILT IN 1573 USING THE FINEST IZNIK TILES. BOTH WERE SONS OF SÜLEYMAN THE MAGNIFICENT


بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم الله لا اله الا هو الحي القيوم لا تأخذه سنة ولا نوم له ما في السموات

were packed with men and boys (the women's establishment is next door). In about 1640 Evliya Çelebi recorded this apposite couplet in the dressing room:

In life on your apparel lay no stress
As everybody must his body here undress.

As we saw for ourselves, the whitewashed, star-studded dome above and the pellucid green water of the octagonal pool below formed a perfect setting for the bathers. They moved unselfconsciously in a never-ending series of tableaux more reminiscent of art than of any reality.

By now it was late morning and time for refreshment, which we gathered from a pastry shop and took with green sage tea in a café beside the Yeşil Cami, or Green Mosque (1419–21). The Yeşil Türbe (Green Tomb) of Çelebi Mehmed (Mehmed I) nearby was closed for restoration, and the main section of the Yeşil Cami roped off for the faithful. After admiring the carved marble entrance, we examined the gold-embossed dark green hexagonal tiles in the wings and the *cuerda seca* inscription above. The custodian was persuaded to let us climb up to the Sultan's loggia looking down on the interior towards the mihrab. Here were the finest *cuerda seca* enamelled tiles of all, and here the craftsmen have signed their work.

The star-studded dome above and the pellucid green water below formed a perfect setting for the bathers. They moved unselfconsciously in a never-ending series of tableaux more reminiscent of art than of any reality

After the mosque, we visited what was once the *medrese*, now a museum of Turkish and Islamic art. It was dusty and uninviting, but had important Iznik ceramics and illuminated manuscripts tucked away in odd corners.

On another hilltop, we climbed up to the Yıldırım Bayezid Mosque (1389–99). Because of its dominant position, it makes an awesome statement and reduces breathless visitors to a state of suitable humility. Inside, the enormous span is supported on flattened arches, and below the mosque is Yıldırım's tomb. It is similarly austere, a simple dome supported by a ring of "Turkish triangles".

Our final destination was the mosque of Emir Sultan (1366–1429) on yet another hill. The square plan of the main building has three tiers of windows on each side, as the massive piers at the four corners are sufficient to support the thrust of the dome and allow the walls to be completely pierced, in fact just like Sinan's Mihrimah Mosque in Istanbul 200 years later. One wonders if Sinan saw this mosque. As far as I know, he didn't work in Bursa at all, which is odd considering the sanctity of the city, and his prolific work elsewhere for the greatest of all Ottoman sultans. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that Süleyman and his wife were not buried in Bursa, but laid to rest in the majestic tombs designed for them by Sinan in Istanbul.

This concluded our swift tour of Bursa, and we sped off to Yalova on the southern shore of the Sea of Marmara to catch the last *feribot* back to Istanbul. The overwhelming impression of Bursa was of a flourishing modern city, tightly ensnared by modern industrial development, but still with a reverence for its imperial past and affluent enough to conserve its major monuments. Rather like a super-industrious hive, with the queen bee at its centre. ◆

John Carswell is the author of many books, including *Blue and White: Chinese Porcelain Around the World* and *Iznik Pottery* (both British Museum Press)

COSTUME DRAMA

Jennifer Scarce

Esat Uluumay has worked constantly to preserve and record the traditions of his native Bursa. He has encouraged the work of the Bursa Folklore Society, collecting local songs and dances and organising performances at home and abroad. He helped sponsor the preservation of the enchanting village of Cumalıkızık outside Bursa, with its traditional houses, mosque and café. He has also recognised the rich heritage of Turkey's regional dress and has steadily collected costumes from Bursa and its surroundings.

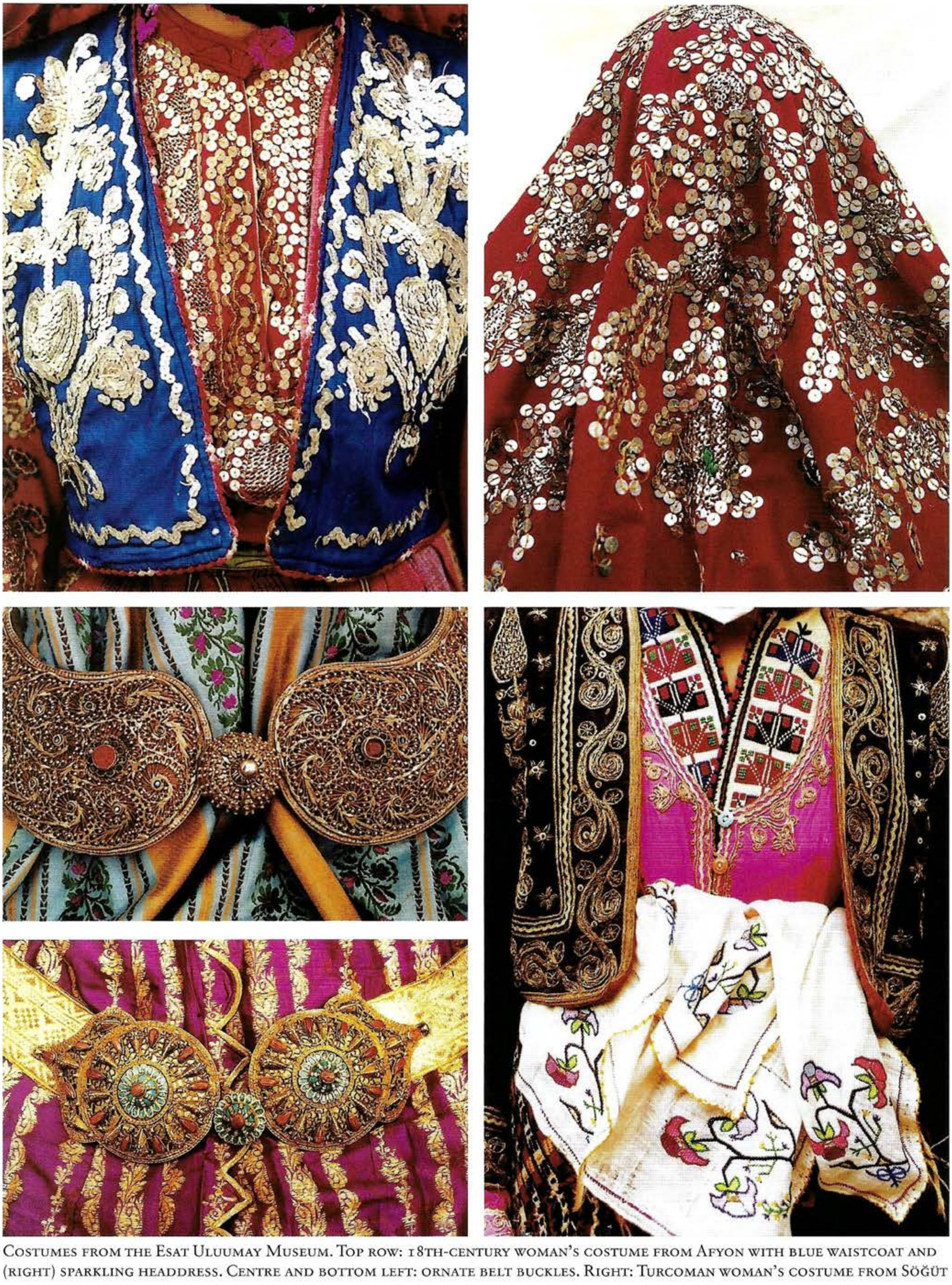
Always generous with his knowledge, he has now achieved his ambition to open a museum. Some 400 costumes are exhibited, mounted on figures and fully accessorised, so as to illustrate weaving, embroidery, knitting and lace-making techniques, as well as the jeweller's craft.

The 18th-century woman's costume and headdress, opposite top left, from Şuhut, Afyon, was worn on festive days. The madder-red cotton *entari* and the blue waistcoat (*yelek*) are embellished with glittering silver sequins.

The fine silver filigree buckle decorated with rubies and turquoise (middle row, left) is from Midyat, Mardin and 18th- or 19th-century. The *tombak* (gilt-copper) buckle below, with coral beads and woven gold belt, is 17th-century.

At the dawn of the Ottoman Empire, the Turcoman would winter in Söğüt and in summer go to the breezy high pastures of Domaniç. A three-metre wool cummerbund (*kemer*) kept them warm. In the costume far right, a white embroidered kerchief (*çevre*) is tucked into the *kemer*. The pink silk dress and aubergine velvet jacket (*cepken*) are embroidered with silver and gold. ◆

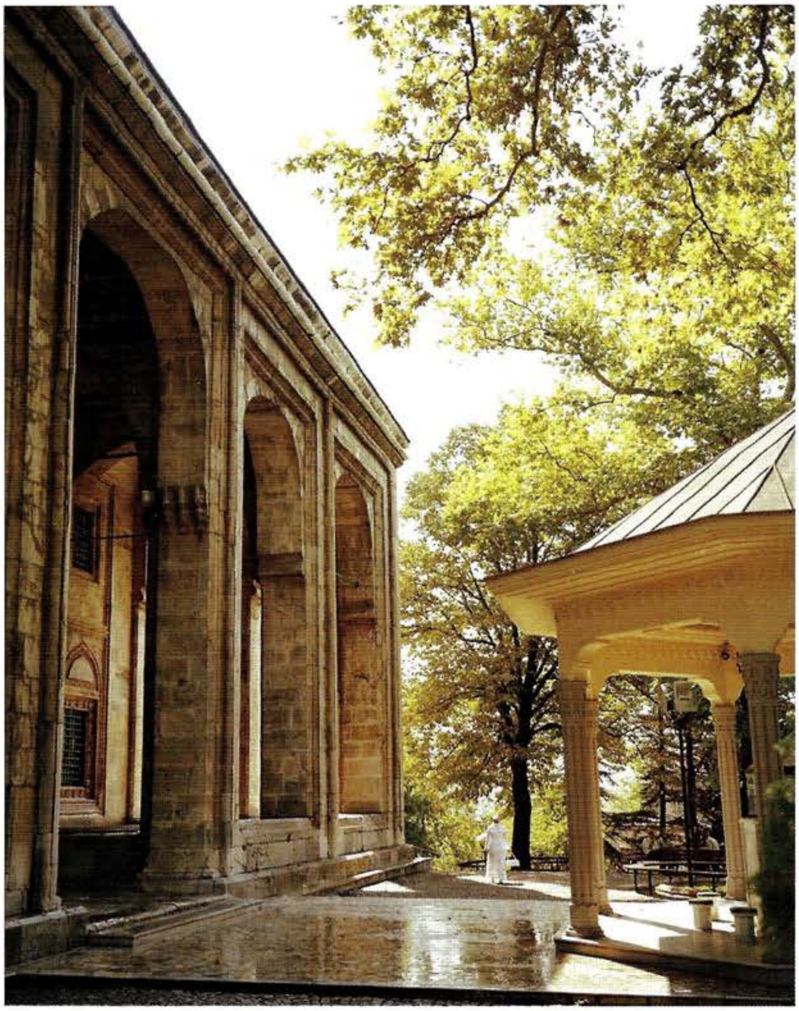
Jennifer Scarce is the author of *Women's Costume of the Near and and Middle East* (Routledge Curzon)



Costumes from the Esat Uluumay Museum. Top row: 18th-century woman's costume from Afyon with blue waistcoat and (right) sparkling headdress. Centre and bottom left: ornate belt buckles. Right: Turcoman woman's costume from Söğüt

Exploring Bursa

It is easy to find your way around Bursa, because wherever you are the mountain of Uludağ is visible behind the city. The key districts are some distance apart, built as they were on different ridges by successive sultans in the 14th and 15th centuries. But getting around is easy by cab or *dolmuş*, or by car using the small lanes above the city to avoid the traffic.



Around the Yeşil Mosque and Emir Sultan

The place for aesthetics: if time is short, spend it at the **Yeşil Cami** and **Yeşil Türbe**, the mosque and tomb of Mehmed I. From here you see why Bursa was known as Green Bursa: you get the most perfect view of the hilltop mosque of **Emir Sultan**, surrounded by cypresses, just a ten-minute stroll away. A sleepy museum in a box-hedged garden occupies the Yeşil medrese, alongside a row of prettily painted houses, now antique shops. Emir Sultan's courtyard, with its wooden arches, has a 19th-century Caucasian feel. Bird-houses are built into all the walls; fine stones and cypresses fill the cemetery below. Itinerant sellers outside the mosques sell leather slippers and earthenware pots. Encourage them.

● Not the place for a meal. Try tea with a pastry from **Arzum**, opposite the museum: buttery bread enriched with sesame oil (*tahinli çörek*), or poppy-seed pastries (*haşhaşlı burma çöreği*). **Yeşil Timsahlar**, at Namazgâh Cad 34, has walnut bread (*cevizli lokum*) and shortbread sculpted like pears, with cloves for stalks.

Around the Ulu Cami

The bustling heart of town, with the **Ulu Cami** (Great Mosque) and its herculean calligraphies, the bazaars brushing up against it, the **Kent Müzesi** (City Museum) for local arts and crafts, and loads of places to eat. Fire and quakes have taken their toll of the **Covered Bazaar**, but it is still choc-a-bloc with Bursa towels, loofahs, *kese* (massage gloves), clogs, bowls and soaps. You can still buy silk at the most famous caravansaray, Koza Han, and sip tea or lemonade (*gazoz*) under the plane trees. Stock up on local cheese and honey at Tahtakale, behind the Ulu Cami. Chewy Mihaliç (pronounced "mahlich") cheese is good at **Polatgil Gıda** (Veziri Cad 11).

● For 80 years the **Iskender Kebabcısı** by the State Theatre – all whitewash and gleaming sky-blue paint – has been home to the eponymous Iskender kebab, döner on *pide*, with tomato sauce, yoghurt and melted butter poured over.

● **Çiçek Izgara** (by the town hall) is famous for another Bursa treat, *Inegöl köfte* – succulent, veal-and-lamb patties, which you sprinkle with paprika and eat with *piyaz*, a bean and onion salad.

● **Ömür Köftecisi**, up at the Ulu Cami's west door, is a more lively *Inegöl köfteci*. Also does chops, good French fries and sweet, milky *kadayıf*.

● **Namlı Ciğerci** (behind Ömür in Ertaş Çarşısı), hidden among the towel shops, does meltingly delicious fried liver.

● For slow cooking, visit **Abidin Usta** in Tuzpazarı, near Çiçek: stews (*yahni*), cabbage leaf wrapped around rice, raisins and chestnuts (*kestaneli lahana dolması*), and, on Fridays, liver and rice wrapped in caul (*ciğer sarması*).

● **Lâlezar** (Ünlü Cad 14, near the Kent Müzesi) also offers local home-cooked delicacies: pit-roasted lamb (*kuzu tandır*), lamb in puff pastry (*talaş kebabı*) and aubergine purée (*hünkâr beyendi*).

● **Bağdat Hurmacısı** pastries ooze syrup. **Kafkas** is king of marron glacé (*kestane şekeri*).

The Muradiye

Escape the concrete in a beautiful, shady garden with loads of history. Take a book on a fine spring day. The **Muradiye Camii**, with its fine brickwork portico, is the last of the great early Bursa mosques. The gardens' imperial mausoleums open during museum hours. Across the square, in the Şair Ahmetpaşa Medrese, is the **Esat Uluumay Museum**, with its costume and jewellery collection.

Tophane

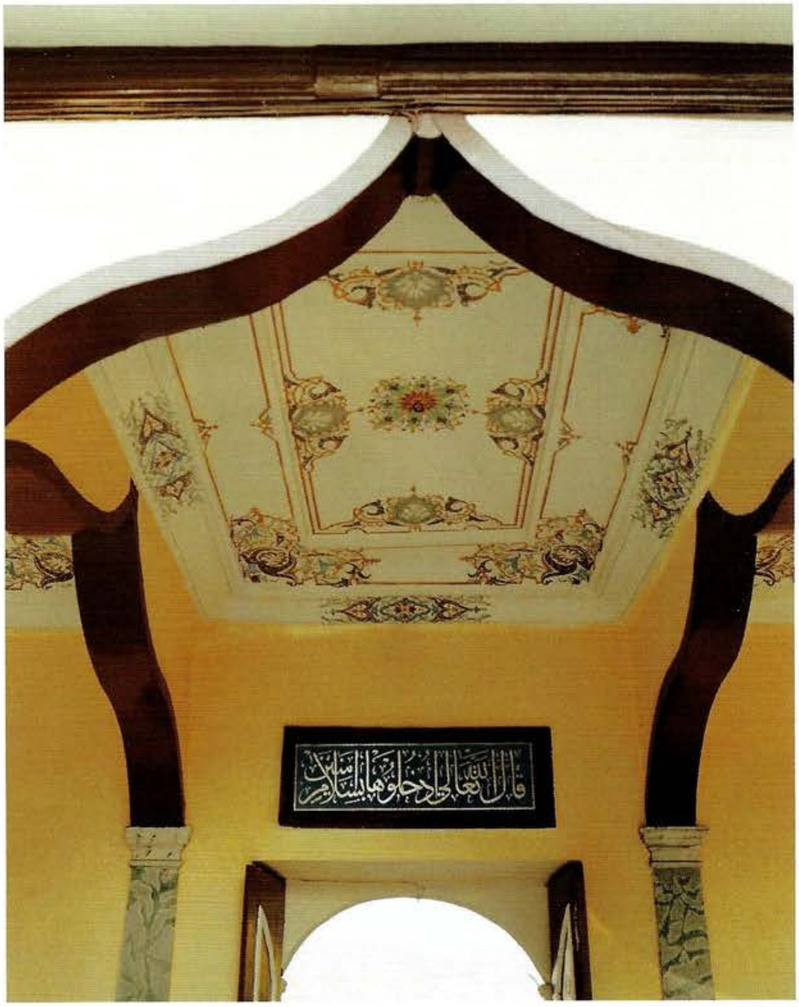
This is the old citadel area. The walled city itself is built up and the walls are being (over-) restored, but get a map and take a stroll. Serious anoraks hunt here for interesting early mosques amid the concrete. **Yaniçoğlu** has a fountain-minaret like a bell tower, **Kavaklı** a 500-year-old plane tree. Mystics gravitate to the sufi **Üftade**. Here Orhan Gazi built his palace. He and his father, Osman Gazi, founder of the Ottoman Empire, lie here in stately tombs.

● **Bursa Kebabçısı** is perfectly placed in the square by the tombs, in an old wooden house rescued by Ibrahim Ünal Avşar, a maths teacher, who does good Iskender kebab, grilled *köfte* on *pide* and delicious puddings: milky *kadayıf*, dried figs stuffed with walnuts (*incir tatlısı*), pumpkin pudding (*kabak tatlısı*). Order a mix and add a dollop of cream (*kaymak*). The grapejuice (*şıra*) and coffee cannot be bettered. If the garden is full, step upstairs for an even better view.

Çekirge

This is bathhouse territory. Çekirge, once a distant suburb on the road to Uludağ, grew up around **Hüdavendigar Camii** and the famous hot springs. There used to be hamams of every shape and size, and a few survive. Most have a hotel attached.

● Survive the noisy wedding parties at the **Kervansaray Hotel**, and in the morning head in your dressing gown to the Eski Kaplıca. At the **Gönlüferah**



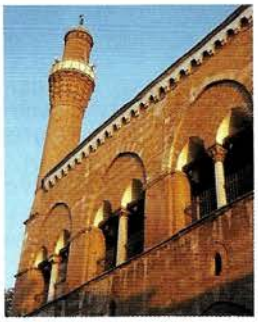
Hotel, a revamped grande dame with the best private hamams (domed pools and lion's heads), step into the lift. The **Çelik Palas** has a Goldfinger pool, but the water is heated.

- Çardak and its fab potato *köfte* are no more; smart hotels spurn Turkish food. On a fine day take the Uludağ road and try an open-air *kendin pişir kendin ye* ("cook-yourself eat-yourself") place. Lamb by the kilo comes to the table with a charcoal *mangal*. Sprinkle with oregano and order a drink.

YILDIRIM BAYEZID AND THE LOWER TOWN

Motorways and malls march across the plain with little for culture vultures except **Yıldırım Bayezid Camii**, 1399, model for the Yeşil Cami – with the portico it lacks – and good places to eat.

- Kurtuluş Cad (Yıldırım Belediyesi) has Bursa's best offal soup (*paça*) shops: the immaculate **Paçacı Hüsnü** (No 219) and earthy **Çorbacı Salih** (No 187). Like many Bursa citizens, Hüsnü is from the Balkans. Veal, vinegar and garlic are the ingredients of his soups, always rich but delicate: there's tripe, finely chopped (*işkembe*) or chunky (*tuzlama*), head (*kelle*), tongue (*dil*), trotter (*ayak*) or brain soup, or a mix. The late Çorbacı Salih served tripe soup for thirty years. Korkut, his grandson, has added pilav, beans (*kuru fasulya*) and *malak ciğeri*, tender female water-buffalo liver.
- The lower town has two fine lokantas: affable **Selim Usta** (Demirtaş Paşa Hamamı, Inönü Cad 70) offers steaming broths, stews, pilav, beans, silky helva. Olive-oil dishes include artichokes and vineleaf dolma. **Hayat** (by the Almira Hotel) attracts factory owners and a conveyor belt of SUVs.
- Iskender's heirs now own the trademark and are busy opening emporia, including the tourist-group friendly **Botanik Bahçesi** – Hollywood Bursa. **Hacıbey** is a plush place at a BP station on the Istanbul road. For the real thing, join the queue in the old Garaj spare-parts district – **Uludağ Kebabçısı** is owned by brothers Cemal and Cemil, old Iskender hands.



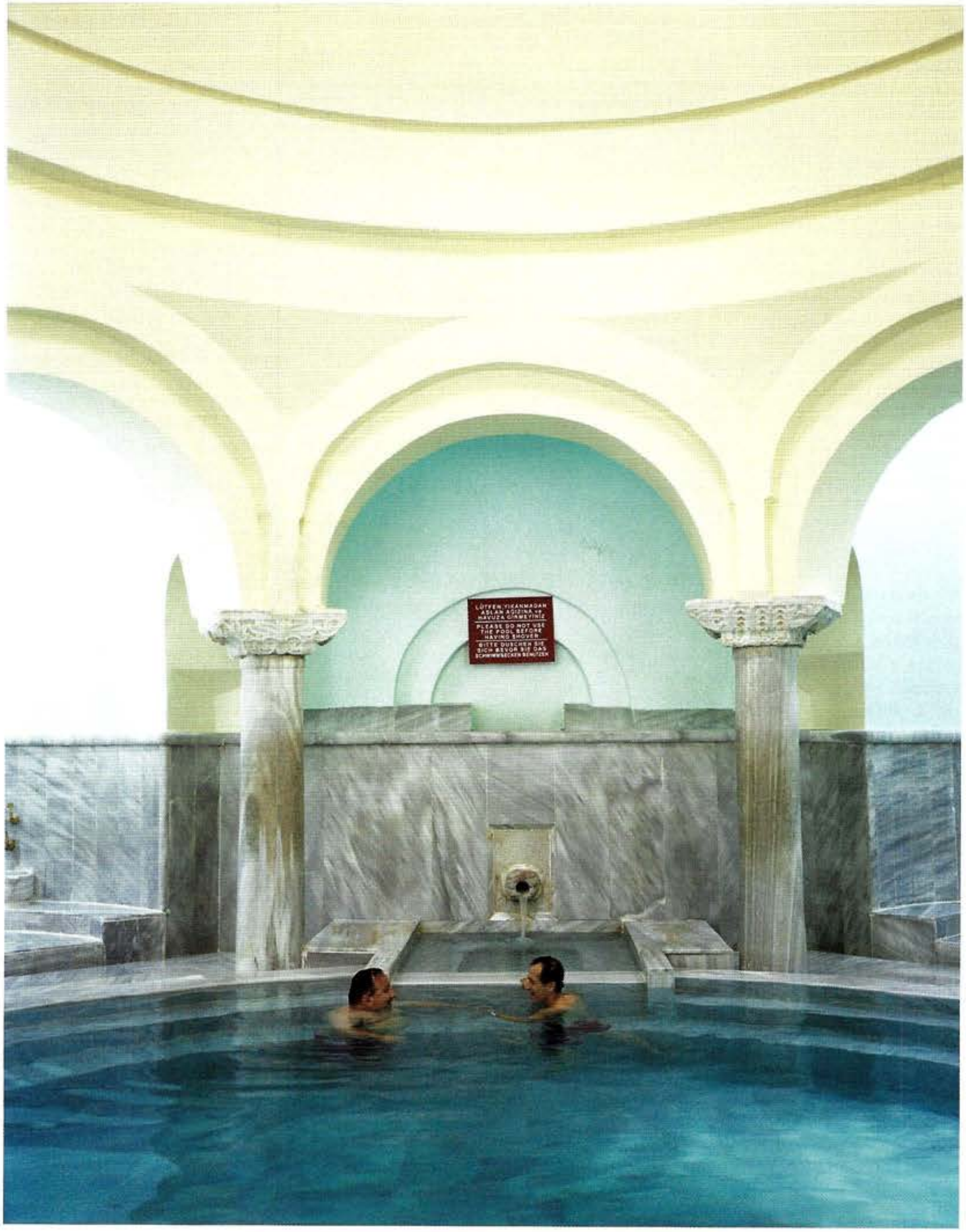
OPPOSITE: THE PORTICO OF THE YILDIRIM BAYEZID MOSQUE. TOP: ENTRANCE TO EMIR SULTAN. ABOVE: THE MEDRESE OF ÇEKIRGE'S HÜDAVENDIGAR MOSQUE

SHORT TRIPS

Bithynia, as the province was called when Pliny was governor, is prosperous, fertile land, far from the tourist trail. To the north, between Yalova and Bursa, the hills are draped with olive groves and Umbria comes to mind. East, the road to Ankara leads to the sterner Anatolian plateau, softened in spring by drifts of cherry blossom. This is border country, littered with the tombs of *babas* and *sultans*, the spiritual leaders of the nomadic Turcomans, who settled here in the 12th century. They are still places of pilgrimage. Along the Marmara west of Bursa is flatter, even more fertile land – good dairy country; hence Bursa's excellent cheeses, worth stocking up on for picnics. The sites are rarely ends in themselves, but are good excuses to roam. Behind every giant plane there's a story (and often a café).

- Uludağ: Coffee under Inkaya's giant plane tree is the first stop, then on you drive, up through forests, first of chestnut then of fir, with places to eat, until you reach the national park. The road ends above the tree-line at the huge ski hotels. Only then do you get a view.
- East: the Ankara road. First stop **Cumalıkızık**, an untouched 700-year-old Turcoman village minutes from Bursa: a lovely wander (avoid weekends). Spring water rushes down the streets, cooling the air and watering orchards. A few villagers rent rooms and offer delicious snacks. Next, **Babasultan**: no longer pretty, but the drive is. Baba Sultan, mounted on a deer, helped Orhan Gazi conquer Bursa and planted the tree in the citadel at Kavaklı Cami before going home to this lovely spot. No politics for him. His tomb is beside another giant plane. Over the door hang antlers. On to poor, ugly, bespoiled **Inegöl. Beşer** is the home of the *Inegöl köfte*, next to Ishak Pasha's once-perfect mosque.
- West: **Gölyazı** is a sleepy island village on **Lake Uluabat**. Further along is **Issızhan** caravansaray. Another 20 minutes and you are in **Karacabey,** famous for its horses. Visit the fair (*panayır*) in May, full of lively gypsies. The lamb's the thing, borne in on a spit, eaten with your fingers – no other meat compares. One last stop in spring: Lake Manyas – where ancient Persians built a paradise garden to watch the birds.
- North: the coast road to **Trilye** (Zeytinbağı) winds through pretty olive groves – very slippery in the harvest season. Buy kilos of olives and eat fish by the harbour at Savarona. The road to **Iznik** via Yenişehir is also beautiful: soothing lake, lovely city walls, glorious sunsets.

WHEN TO GO: any time but high summer. In bleak midwinter, heaven is tramping through the snow to a marrow-warming hamam.
GETTING THERE: by *vapur* to Yalova, or high-speed *hızlı feribot* to Mudanya (ido.com.tr). If driving from Istanbul, take the calming Eskihisar ferry to Yalova. More links at cornucopia.net/bursa.html



THE BATHS OF BURSA

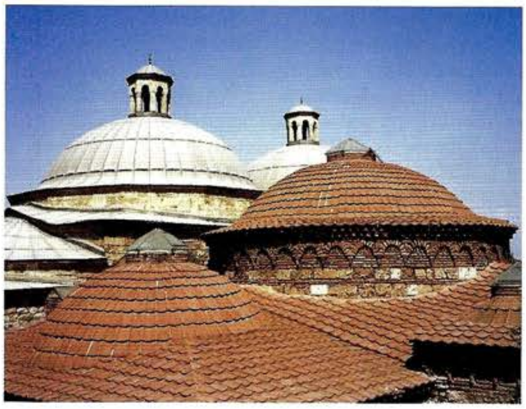
The seventeenth-century Turkish traveller Evliya Çelebi wrote that Bursa consisted purely of water. Springs, hot and cold, gushed out of the hillside, and they still do.

Before the First World War, Bursa was the height of fashion. Each water had its peculiarity, and visitors spent weeks taking them in sequence. One governor found himself looking after the Duke of Schleswig-Holstein, Prince Victor Napoleon and Duke Carl Edward Saxe-Coburg in quick succession.

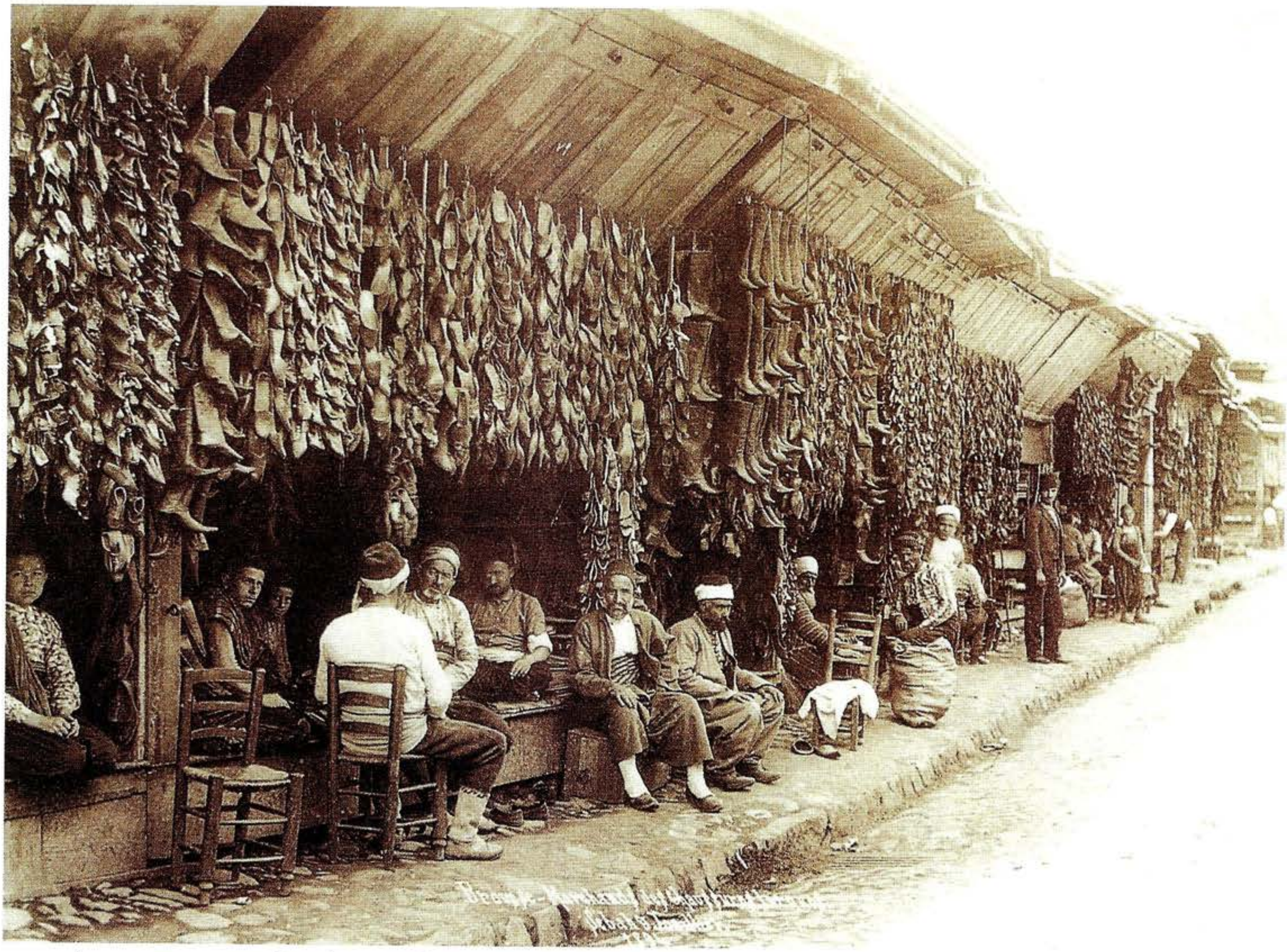
The two most famous baths are the Yeni Kaplıca (New Hot Springs) and the Eski Kaplıca (Old Hot Springs). In this issue John Carswell favours the former, Heath Lowry the latter. The heavily renovated Eski Kaplıca is now virtually part of the luxury Kervansaray Hotel, and you are likely to have the place to yourself. On the other hand, the Yeni Kaplıca, barely changed since 1894, is bustling from dawn to dusk.

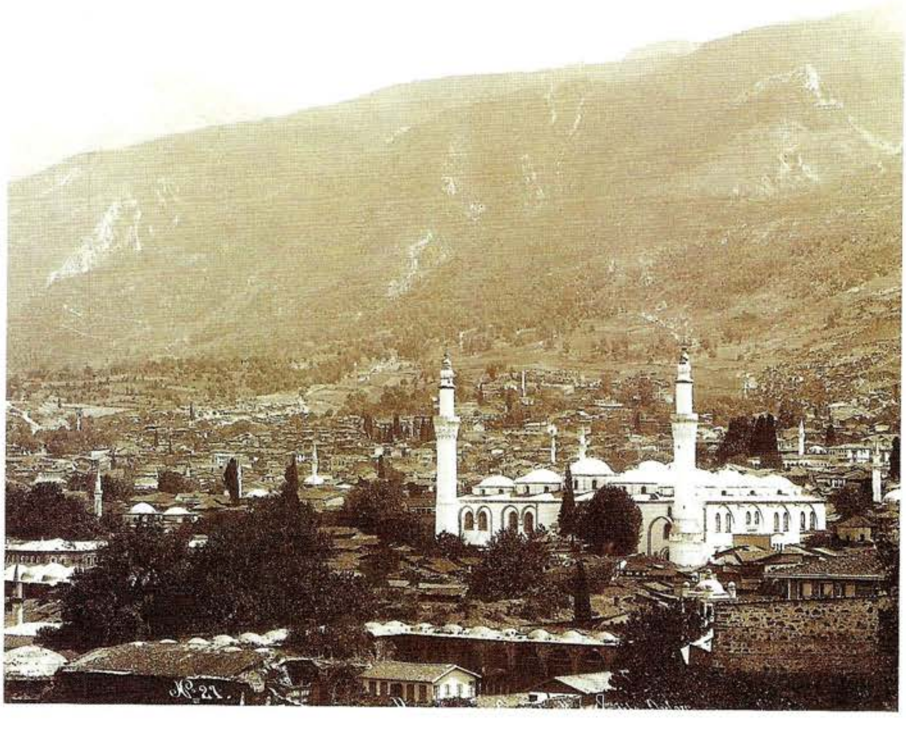
Some hotels in the Çekirge area still have their own springs and baths, from the plush, such as the Gönlüferah, to the delightfully old-fashioned, such as the Selvinaz, sadly threatened by developers.

Many other handsome hamams are dotted around the city, including the Timurtaş Paşa and the Mahkeme, which both heat their water – the latter using sawdust.



THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE: THE ESKI KAPLICA, BUILT BY MURAD I (1362–89) ON THE RUINS OF A ROMAN BATH. ABOVE: THE 'HALVET', OR WASHING HALL, WHERE HOT WATER SPOUTS FROM A LION'S HEAD. FAR LEFT AND OPPOSITE: A MARBLE BASIN ('KURNA') FOR MIXING HOT AND COLD WATER. LEFT: BAYEZID II ADDED THE TALLER, LEAD-DOMED HALLS IN 1511. THERE YOU COOL OFF GENTLY AFTER YOUR BATH





Above: shoe shops in Bursa's market. Below: the Ulu Cami and, in front, the covered bazaar (both by Sébah & Joaillier c1890)

RECAPTURING OLD BURSA

With a population of over two million, Bursa has already been swamped by concrete. Fortunately, "Green" Bursa's swansong coincided with the rise of photography. The Kent Müzesi (City Museum) always has interesting displays on the social history of the city, and several good albums of photographs have been published.

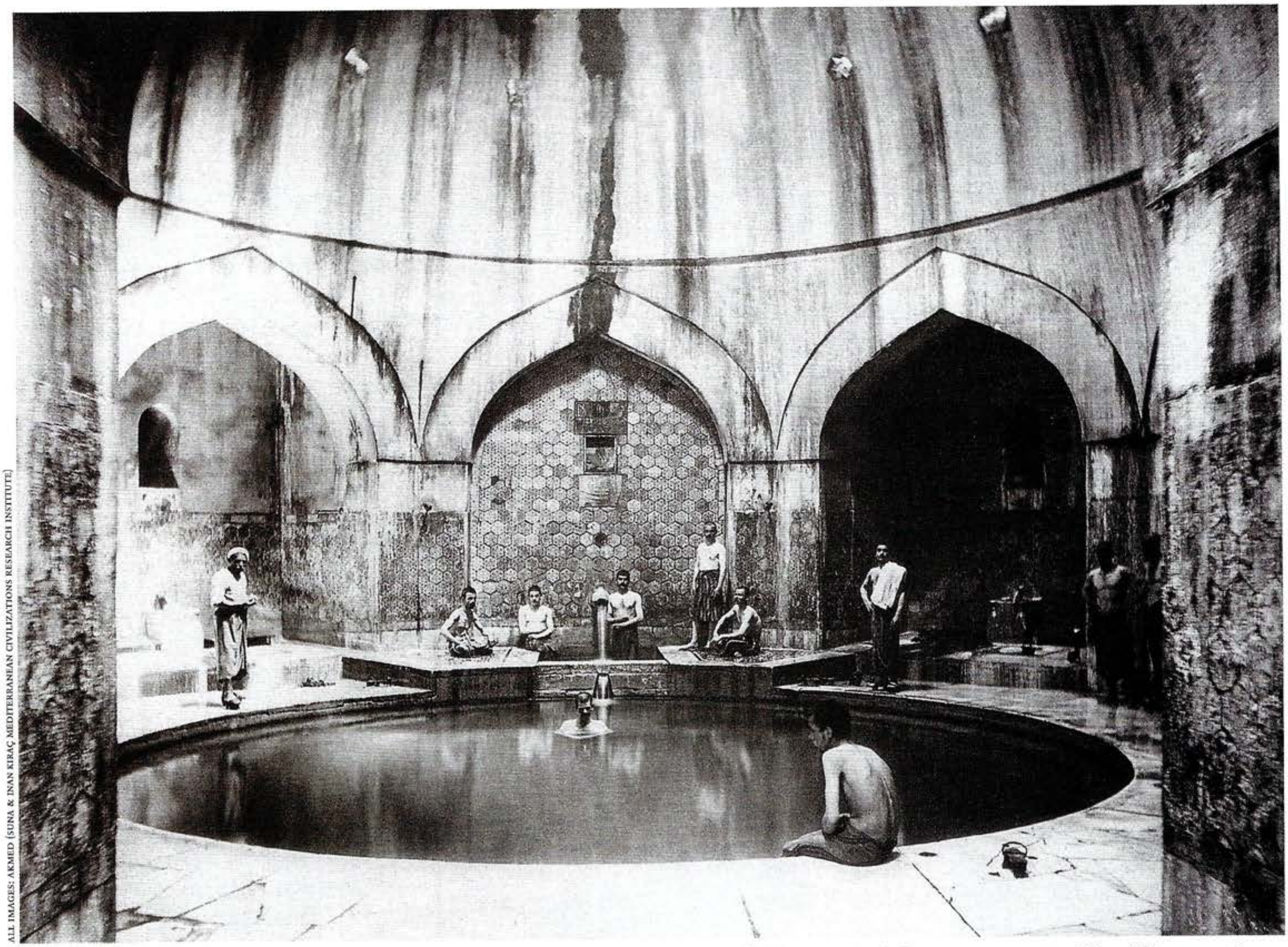
The photographs shown here are from *Bursa in the Ottoman Period*, by Neslihan Türkün Dostoğlu (pub Akmed). In two volumes in Turkish, French and English, it has images from the Suna and Inan Kıraç Collection and the Albert Khan Museum, Paris. Engin Özendeş's *Bursa: Osmanlı'nın Ilk Başkenti* (Bursa: First Ottoman Capital, pub YEM) is a good collection of photos in paperback.

On the historical front, the birth of the Ottoman Empire is best explained in Heath Lowry's *Nature of the Early Ottoman Empire*. His *Ottoman Bursa in Travel Accounts* uses untapped sources that historians have largely ignored. *Osman's Dream*, by Caroline Finkel, is a good general history.

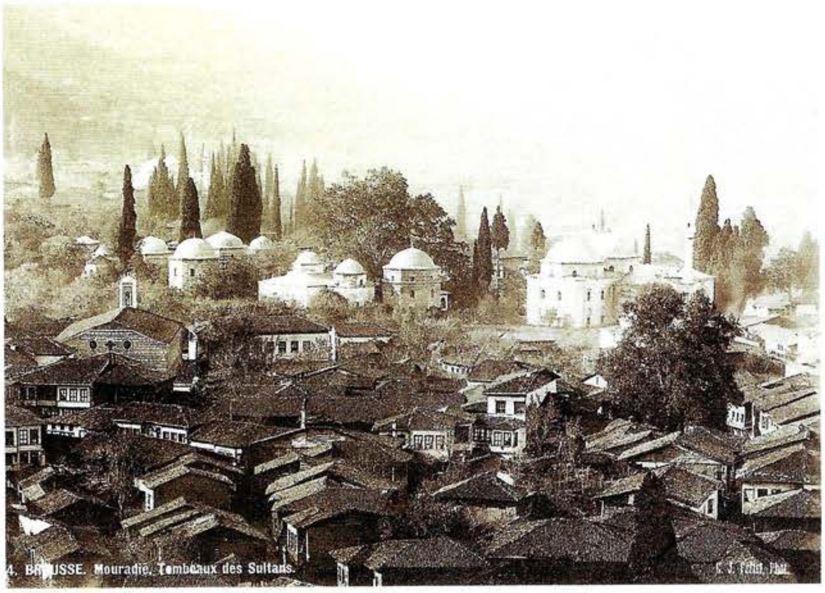
Devlet Ana (Mother State), Kemal Tahir's classic saga set in the early Ottoman years, awaits translation. The only detailed guidebook to the area in English, *Mini Tours*, by Betsy Harrell (Redhouse), is out of print but well worth finding.

Bursa books: cornucopia.net/bookspage.html

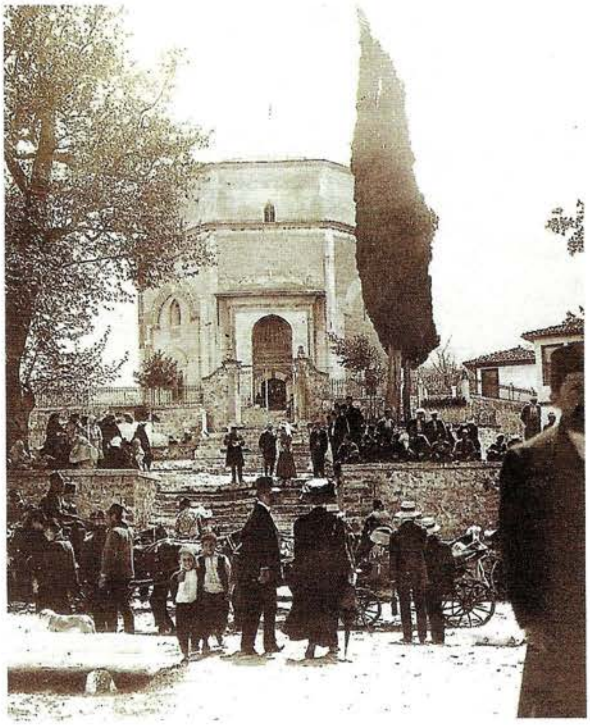
ALL IMAGES: AKMED (SUNA & INAN KIRAÇ MEDITERRANEAN CIVILIZATIONS RESEARCH INSTITUTE)



Above: The Yeni Kaplica (Sébah & Joaillier, 1894). Below left: the Muradiye (CJ Fettel, 1895). Right: visiting the Yeşil Türbe, 1908

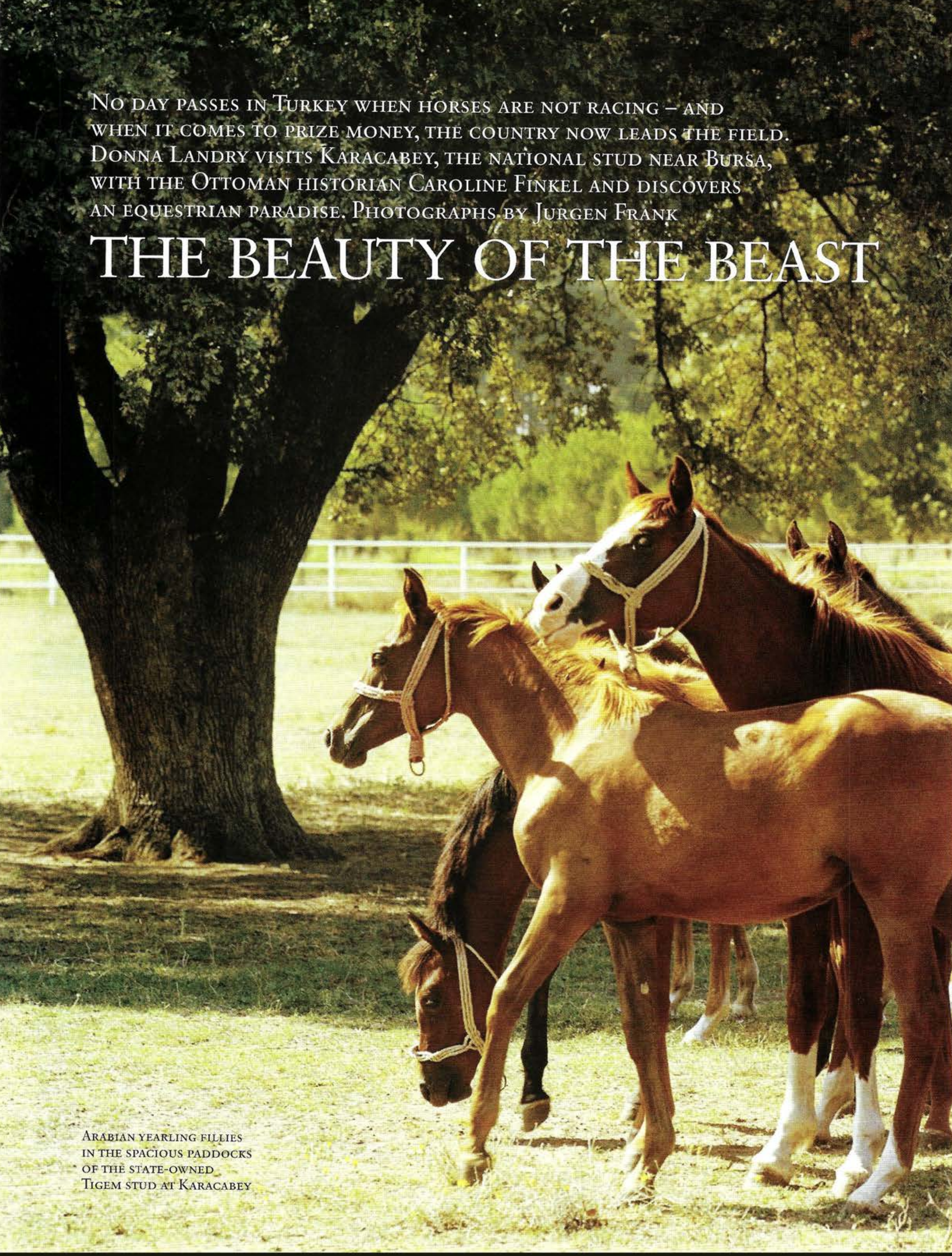


'This city resembles the gardens of Paradise; it is written that there are as many as forty-seven thousand orchards and gardens, including vegetable gardens and rose gardens. In the lower city it is the custom for every house to have a garden; likewise each must have its pond and fountain.'
– Evliya Çelebi, 17th-century Ottoman traveller and courtier



No day passes in Turkey when horses are not racing – and when it comes to prize money, the country now leads the field. Donna Landry visits Karacabey, the national stud near Bursa, with the Ottoman historian Caroline Finkel and discovers an equestrian paradise. Photographs by Jurgen Frank

THE BEAUTY OF THE BEAST



Arabian yearling fillies in the spacious paddocks of the state-owned Tigem stud at Karacabey

The magnificent Arab stallion Sergen with his manager, Rafi Çolakoğlu. Sergen, who died this year, was descended from Baba Kuruş, who had a big impact on Turkish racing. The plaque above the door declares 'The horse, the Turk's wings'. Despite some common ancestry Arabians differ from their Thoroughbred descendants. The Arab is comparatively small, with short-coupled body, rather upright shoulders and extravagantly 'dished' face. It holds its head and tail high

r kuvvet,eşkin bir atla gerek.
Dadaloğlu

Türk'ün kanadıdır.
Kaşgarlı Mahmut
Âlimlerin bindiği atın
üstümüze sıçrayan çamur

Broad acres. As the highway winds from Bursa and the Marmara coast towards Izmir and the Aegean, a prospect opens of rolling fields and white fences. There are stands of trees in immaculate parkland. Horses move in the shadows and across the vast expanses, roaming freely within their huge enclosures. Welcome to Karacabey, a paradise for horses divided by the highway.

On the eastern side of the road, large, shield-shaped signs ornament the fences, proclaiming that these rolling hills and horses are the property of TJK, Türkiye Jokey Kulübü, the Jockey Club of Turkey. An imposing central gateway leads down to modern barns, offices and home paddocks, with a more distant view of pink stucco houses and grain silos. All is bathed in brilliant sunshine, and completely open to the gaze of the bystander.

The western side of the highway is more discreetly signposted, more heavily forested, more difficult to glimpse from the road. This is the domain of TIGEM, Tarım Işletmeleri Genel Müdürlüğü, the General Directorate of Agricultural Enterprises, Karacabey branch. Here the horses – as well as cattle, sheep and kangals, those wolfish, loyal guardian sheepdogs – are the property of the Turkish government.

At Karacabey the usual relative assets and priorities of today's globalised culture are reversed. The government stud of 8,800 hectares lies in the land of milk and honey. "We rented them the desert," jokes Murat Durmaz, the veterinary surgeon in charge, gesturing in the direction of TJK's roughly 700 hectares. Not only does the other side of the road lack the plentiful underground water sources of TIGEM's side of things, but even the rain tends to fall on the western half of Karacabey and bypass the eastern half. Here the veteran trees, herb-rich hay meadows and beautifully cultivated gardens fill the five senses, and the harsh lines of traditional state buildings are softened by a bower of bliss. Shaded by luxuriant grapevines, employees drink tea and eat freshly made ice-cream from the farm's prize dairy herd. Under dense plane and evergreen trees, airy quarters accommodate workers and visitors who come to TIGEM for seminars. When we visited, nineteen Sudanese agricultural

ABOVE LEFT: 32ND SAPHA, WHOSE BLOODLINE IS KNOWN FOR PRODUCING CLASSIC ARABIAN HEADS. MARES ARE NUMBERED FROM THE FOUNDATION MARE THROUGH THE FEMALE LINE.
ABOVE RIGHT: ARAB YEARLING FILLIES. FREE-RANGE GRAZING IS THE POLICY AT KARACABEY.
LEFT: AN AVENUE LEADS TO THE GRAVES OF BABA KURUŞ AND BABA SA'AD, FOUNDATION SIRES OF MODERN TURKISH ARABIANS.
RIGHT: THE ENTRANCE TO THE ARABIANS' GRAVES AS THEY LOOKED BEFORE REFURBISHMENT TOOK PLACE IN APRIL 2007

engineers were in attendance.

From the combined produce of its Arabian racing stock (200 mares and twelve stallions), its 5,000 sheep and Holstein, Swiss Simmenthal and native Anatolian cattle, its Karabaş and Akbaş (black-headed and white-headed) kangals, and various seeds, Karacabey actually makes money for the government rather than requiring agricultural subsidies.

Outside the stallion barn, where we were introduced to this year's favoured champion sire, Caş (pronounced Jash), the bloodstock sale ring glows green, a world apart from the arid environs across the road. Last year at auction, one of the youngsters, blind in one eye from an accident, nevertheless sold for YTL3,000, the cheapest price paid. TIGEM Karacabey grosses $4 million a year from sales and breeding fees for the twelve stallions standing at stud, with a net profit of $2 million. The second-class-citizen status of Arabian horses worldwide, and indeed of state employees, in comparison with the vast private fortunes associated with Thoroughbred bloodstock, has been turned upside down at Karacabey. At TIGEM, there is palpable pride at running a profitable enterprise on behalf of the nation.

In TJK's water-deprived domains across the road, vast sums are being spent – perhaps as much as $7 million per year – and although private enterprise is at the helm, there are no profits yet, except of the symbolic kind. Beautiful horseflesh and its attendant status bring benefits, of course, but at Karacabey, the TJK has expenditures far in excess of its income from stud fees and the keeping of brood mares and young stock for private owners.

Construction of TJK's Karacabey facilities began on the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the Jockey Club in 2000, and the first mares were covered there in the 2001 season. Since the arrival two years ago of the new director, Ismail Zeki Yazıcı, we were told, there have been improvements to the physical plant, and especially to the farm's irrigation facilities. Although at the height of summer there was not so much green to be seen as at other times of year, more paddocks now have water than in

'You can begin to tell almost from birth who the leaders are. Thoroughbreds are born to gallop and compete with each other. And so even the foals are competing – who is fastest, who is cleverest, who is in the lead and showing the way to the others?'

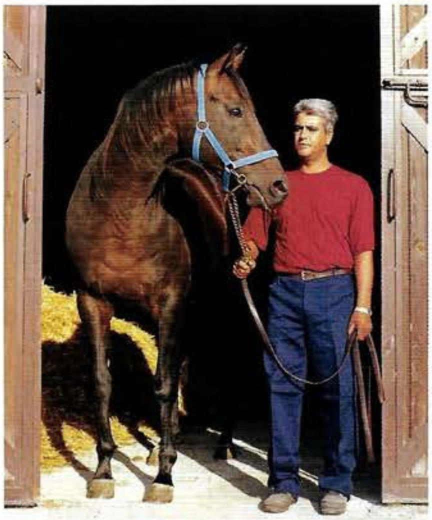
previous years, and there are ambitious plans to dig new wells.

It is part of the philosophy here to rear the horses as naturally as possible, as our TJK host, the veterinary surgeon Ayşe Yetiş, explains. And these days that means free-range grazing supplemented with the best diet and medical attention. TJK has invested in state-of-the-art facilities, such as a modern operating theatre and laboratory, and does not skimp on the salaries and benefits of its employees, who include ten vets, eleven veterinary assistants and more than one hundred grooms. The mares and foals, yearling fillies and colts, are fed their oats, barley and other hard food indoors before being turned out – in the evening in summer, and in the morning in winter. In the paddocks and in the boxes there is a constant supply of the best hay. Indoors, the horses luxuriate in lavishly straw-filled boxes. The snoring of one completely relaxed, leg-splayed yearling colt echoed down the barn.

Because TJK try to be ecologically conscious as well as money-conscious, the dung and straw bedding are collected periodically by the mushroom growers of Bursa in a constant cycle of feeding, excreting and replenishment. It is hardly surprising that some racehorse owners choose to board their brood mares and young stock here all the year round, rather than simply sending their mares to the farm for breeding. For YTL800 a month, less than the rent of an Istanbul flat, owners can keep their horses at Karacabey, with all costs covered, except for veterinary drugs and major surgery, should need arise.

All this care and attention is paying off: in the past two years Turkish Thoroughbreds have begun to distinguish themselves in international racing, while foreign mares have arrived for covering. TJK operates in many ways more like a government agency or philanthropic organisation than a business concern.

There are constant reminders on both sides of the highway that the whole of Karacabey harks back to Atatürk's time, and even claims earlier Ottoman origins. The TIGEM brochure observes that TIGEM has a much longer heritage than its official founding in 1984. State farms were "established during the first years of the young Republic of Turkey by our Leader Atatürk in order to lead and train the Turkish Farmers". They replaced previous stud farms, whose establishment "extends way back to the first years of the Ottoman Empire". Among the TIGEM horses there are still some whose bloodlines trace back to foundation mares from the imperial Ottoman stables: Cahide (b. 1915), a grey mare of the classic Syrian Seklavi Cedraniye strain, came from the imperial palace stables in 1917; the bay Mahsuse (b. 1906), a Seklavi Manekiye entered the stud in 1910 (one of the three Thoroughbred foundation sires, the Darley Arabian, smuggled to England in 1704, was of the Maneki line); and the chestnut Mesrure (b. 1912), of the famous Küheylan Acuz strain (the female form is Küheyletül Acuz in Turkish), came in 1924. These mares might have been chosen for their combination of most revered strains with favoured colours – for though "a good horse is never a bad colour" these days in the Western world, in Ottoman culture, as in early modern English culture, there was a definite hierarchy. In 1845, Charles White reported in *Three Years in Constantinople* that "the favourite colours are grey, bay and chestnut". The Ottomans were clearly more tolerant of equine fire than their northern European counterparts. In 1560, Thomas Blundeville, quoted verbatim by Gervase Markham fifty years later, advertised the virtues of dapple greys and bays above all other colours, but deplored a "bright sorrel" as "hot, fiery and of little strength". Only the coming of Eastern horses would make the phlegmatic islanders of Britain more tolerant of horses such as the bright chestnut Eclipse, who raced "first, the rest nowhere", but was notoriously hot to handle. There was more agreement between East and West about white markings on the legs. If the English proverb regarding white stockings is "One, buy him; two, try him; three, doubt him; four, go home without him", the Turkish version is more generous, while coming to the same conclusion concerning four white stockings: "One white leg, one purse; two, two purses; three, four purses; but four white legs, a *para* (penny); the fourth white leg destroys the charm".



The Jockey Club's Thoroughbred stud at Karacabey. Above: the stallion Red Bishop with stallion groom Selim Taşdemir. Opposite: yearling fillies

So powerful is the continuity of equestrian culture between the late Ottoman past and the founding of the Turkish Republic that Karacabey venerates rather than rejects Ottoman and Arab origins. Two of the most important foundation sires of Turkish Arabians now lie buried at Karacabey: Baba Kuruş (1921–45), imported from Damascus, who combined Küheyletül Kuruş and Seklavi Şieyfi strains, and Baba Sa'ad (1928–50), imported from Baghdad. Atatürk's right-hand man Ismet Inönü, an accomplished horseman, loved Baba Kuruş and used to ride him. When the horse fell ill, the director of the stud could not bring himself to report to him with this painful news. When the horse died, the director sent Inönü a telegram, saying delicately: "KURUŞ YATTI KALKMAZ HARA MÜDÜRÜ MUMTAZ"– "Kuruş Lay Down Will Not Rise Stud Director Mumtaz."

The beautiful grey stallion Sergen (photographed for CORNUCOPIA in 2005), who died in March 2007, was descended from Baba Kuruş. As Murat Durmaz remarks, although his bloodline remains powerful, it is in fact Baba Sa'ad who has had a greater impact on Turkish racing. The favoured sire at Karacabey this year is Caş, a descendant of Baba Sa'ad, out of "42nd" Mahsuse, a direct descendant of an Ottoman imperial line. (Mares are named by being given numbers attached to the foundation mare to whom they trace their descent "in tail female", or along the natural female line.) One of Caş's foals recently sold for YTL140,000 ($110,000) as a two-year-old, the most expensive Turkish Arabian to date. Caş, winner of the Malazgirt Trophy in 1999, sired the highly successful Kafkaslı, owned by Remazan Kaya, a member of the powerful Kaya Arabian racing family of Şanlıurfa. Kafkaslı, now eight years old, has won some $2.5 million in prize money, setting a record in 2006 of 2 minutes 24.7 seconds in the 2,100 metre Independence War Cup race at Veliefendi Racecourse in Istanbul. Kafkaslı, we should note, is a brilliant bay with three white legs.

Divided by the highway, Karacabey thus has two faces: a self-consciously globalised TJK face and a traditional but proudly successful, agriculturally diverse TIGEM face. And yet on both sides of the road, horses reign supreme, whether the Jockey Club's Thoroughbreds – *"Ingiliz"*, "English" horses – or TIGEM's purebred Arabians – *"safkan Araplar"* – also bred primarily for racing. On every day throughout the year, somewhere in Turkey, horses are racing. Every day, Turks scan the newspapers for racing programmes and racing results.

Betting is a growth industry, earning the TJK upwards of YTL1.3 billion annually. And the TJK pays the government the highest percentage of tax on betting profits anywhere in the world. For some years that rate was set at 60 per cent, but was recently lowered to 50 per cent, still the world's highest rate of betting tax.

As Burak Konuk, TJK's international affairs manager, explains, raising prize money is the only way to take Turkey into the big leagues in international racing, and that has not been possible until very recently. On September 9 this year, at the International Race Meeting at the Veliefendi Hippodrome in Istanbul, there were two outstanding new prizes offered: the Topkapı Trophy for Thoroughbred three-year-olds and older is now the richest one-mile race in Europe, with a total purse of $1,020,000, of which $600,000 goes to the winner; while the Malazgirt Trophy for three-year-old and older purebred Arabians (as registered with the World Arabian Horse Organisation), might just be the richest prize in Arabian racing anywhere, with $500,000 going to the winner out of a purse of $850,000.

Unusually, Thoroughbred racing and purebred Arabian racing take place side by side on racetracks throughout Turkey, with *Ingiliz* and *Arap* sharing a race card. In the rest of the world, Thoroughbred racing dominates, while Arabian, where it exists, is marginalised as a small specialist activity. In Turkey, Arabian racing has come into its own, and nowhere in the world has more races or better prize money for Arabians. From the spectators' vantage point in the grandstand, the runners modulate from *Ingiliz* to *Arap* in a changing pageant of galloping styles. On the horizon a flowing, low-striding Thoroughbred river may be glimpsed, to be followed by a tossing sea of the bouncier, shorter-striding Arabians. This sameness within difference, or proximity with distinctions, renders Karacabey, with its two faces, a microcosm of Turkey's unusual status within global racing.

In Turkey, more than anywhere else in the world today, the close kinship between Arabians and English horses is revealed on a daily basis. Between 1650 and 1750 more than 200 Turks, Arabians and Barbs (Barbary horses) were imported through the Levant trade, specifically to improve the breeding of English (and Irish) horses destined for racing. At the heart of the so-called English Thoroughbred lies a gene pool in which previously separate Oriental breeds, or "races", to use the seventeenth-century term, were intensively mixed as well as fed on the new grasses and cereals of the Agricultural Revolution.

The Thoroughbred was a product of agrarian enterprise in the British Isles, but the raw materials were almost exclusively of Eastern extraction. Even the best native gallopers of the seventeenth century, the Yorkshire galloways and Irish racing hobbies, owed their superior speed to Eastern infusions from the distant past. And so it is fitting that Turkish Arabians, at least, should still be recognised and honoured as genetic forebears of today's leanest, meanest racing machines. "You can begin to tell almost from birth who the leaders are," comments the vet Ayşe Yetiş. "Thoroughbreds are born to gallop and compete with each other. And so even the foals are competing – who is fastest, who is cleverest, who is in the lead and showing the way to the others?"

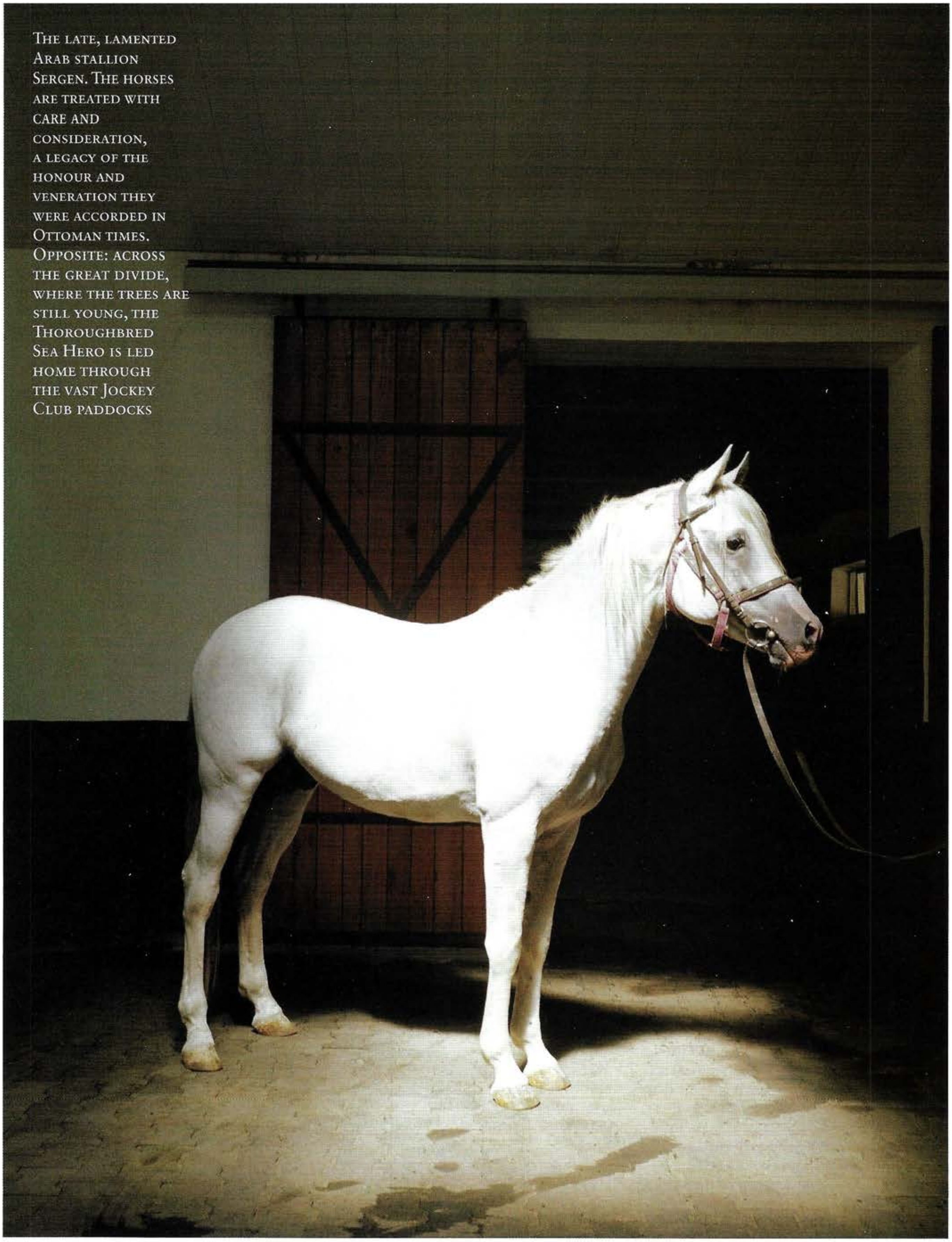
Hopes are high for the youngsters at TJK Karacabey these days, after the success of such horses as the stallion Sabırlı (Strike the Gold x Free Trade), bred at Karacabey, who has won at least $1.37 million and came third in the prestigious Dubai World cup in 2006. The mare Ribella (Reveque x Tajerip) won the Topkapı Trophy in 2006, and also raced well in Dubai. Free Trade, the dam of Sabırlı, who is owned by Aydoğan San, has a very promising bay colt by her side this year, a full brother to Sabırlı. There are likely-looking colts by a variety of stallions, most of them now standing at Karacabey. Sea Hero, like Strike the Gold, won the Kentucky Derby in America; Sri Pekan is the leading sire in Italy, so very popular with Italian mares; Eagle Eyed and West By West have many bookings. Mountain Cat, formerly of Karacabey, now standing at Izmit, covered eighty mares this year. Ayşe is particularly keen on some of her fillies – such as Özlemcan's filly of 2006 by British import Lockton; her sister, born in 2005, was already the winner of four races by late July 2007, only two months into her first season. And there is something utterly charismatic in the self-possessed, alert and sensitive air of the 2006 bright chestnut filly out of Miss the Point by Mountain Cat.

Is there a different philosophy of horse-keeping in Turkey today, of the sort that so impressed European travellers to the Ottoman Empire when Eastern bloodstock was being imported in its greatest numbers? Europeans were repeatedly struck by how gently and lovingly Ottoman horsemen seemed to manage their horses, in contrast with the brutal practices familiar in Europe.

The Habsburg ambassador Ogier de Busbecq claimed that there was "no Creature so gentle as a Turkish Horse; nor more respectful to his Master, or the Groom that dresses him", and John Evelyn remembered this comment nearly a century later when he met Ottoman horses for the first time in Hyde Park in 1684. "The reason is," Busbecq had reasoned, "because they treat their Horses with great Lenity…This makes their Horses great Lovers of Mankind; and they are so far from kicking, wincing, or growing untractable by this gentle usage, that you shall hardly find a masterless Horse among them."

THOROUGHBREDS LIKE SEA HERO (ABOVE), THE KENTUCKY DERBY WINNER AND POPULAR KARACABEY SIRE, ARE LARGER, LEGGIER AND LONGER-BODIED THAN ARABIANS, WITH MORE SLOPING SHOULDERS AND STRAIGHTER FACES. THEY ARE ALSO CONSIDERABLY FASTER

Ayşe and her team of grooms certainly adhere to this philosophy. Peace and gentleness reign in the barns and paddocks, as indeed they do across the road, where the more tractable Arabians, when not running free outside, spend their indoor time tied up next to one another in long ranks,



The late, lamented Arab stallion Sergen. The horses are treated with care and consideration, a legacy of the honour and veneration they were accorded in Ottoman times. Opposite: across the great divide, where the trees are still young, the Thoroughbred Sea Hero is led home through the vast Jockey Club paddocks

The fierceness of Ottoman horses was matched only by their sensitivity to human competence, or incompetence. Evliya Çelebi reported from Vienna in 1664 that the presentation of a küheylan to the Habsburg emperor had resulted in the deaths of many Frankish "kafirs"

like cavalry horses or polo ponies.

We also catch a glimpse of something like an Ottoman philosophy of respecting a horse's intelligence, and of paying a debt of honour to a horse after a lifetime of service, from the young jockey Mehmet Kaya, who rode Kafkaslı to some of his victories. He claims to have learned more about riding from the horses themselves than from anybody else, and acknowledges that they know more about what goes on in racing than they are given credit for. When the Kaya horses have finished their racing careers, they are not sold, but retired to the family farm in Urfa.

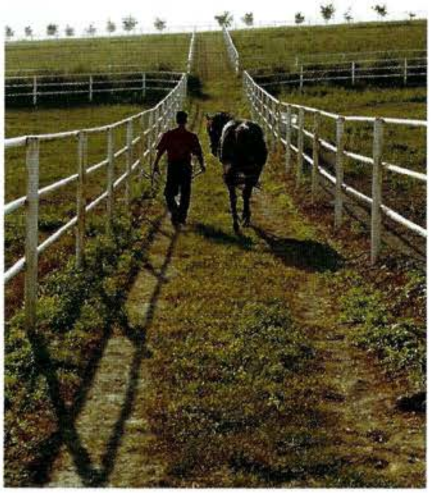
Horses were not only respected but honoured and venerated in Ottoman culture. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when European traders and diplomats began coming to Ottoman territory in greater numbers, the indigenous horse culture remained considerably more sophisticated than in contemporary Europe. There was no finer horse than the *küheylan*, according to the Ottoman courtier and traveller Evliya Çelebi, who set out on the pilgrimage to Mecca with no fewer than fifteen of these creatures, whose name in Ottoman Turkish suggests eyes made luminous by their setting, as if kohl-rimmed, in fine black skin through which the veins of the head showed. In Arabic *küheylan* means "thoroughbred" or "purebred all through". In 1667, William Cavendish, the Duke of Newcastle, noted that all who had seen the horses of Constantinople agreed that "there are There, the most Beautifull-Horses in the World... And certainly they are Brave Horses!"

The fierceness of Ottoman horses was matched only by their sensitivity to human competence. Evliya Çelebi reported from Vienna in 1664 that the presentation of a *küheylan* to the Habsburg emperor had resulted in the deaths of many Frankish *"kafirs"* because of the horse's dislike of non-Muslims in their outlandish clothes. An Ottoman groom spoke soothingly to the fiery Ceyhun, who responded immediately to him, whinnying and coming obediently to his side, but the horse would not brook infidel bad management. Evliya reported saying to the ambassador: "Sultanum, this horse is a *gazi* (warrior) horse; the Ottoman Sultan has ridden it; this horse has broken so many *kafirs*, and has done so much damage, that afterwards they will kill it. Better give them another horse." The ambassador said wait and see. Ceyhun soon erupted from the stables and went like lightning, whinnying and galloping round the city until he smelled the corpses of the horses in the square of the Çerkez (Circassian) martyrs; then he gave up his soul and died. According to Evliya, all the Muslim soldiers were "amazed by what the horse had done". They dug him a grave in the square, which commemorates Süleyman's siege of Vienna in 1529. Sniffing these corpses of compatriots, the noble beast himself expired – a little allegory of Ottoman superiority to Habsburg pretensions to imperial glory.

Arguably, even today, the *at* – the horse – lies at the heart of Turkish identity. As Mahir Başdoğan, horseman and radio presenter, points out, "It is not mere coincidence that in Turkish the word for horse, *at*, and the word for name, *ad*, are so close linguistically." Başdoğan's weekly show on the Istanbul station Açık Radyo, on Mondays at 2pm Turkish time, is surprisingly popular. Listeners to *Adeta Dört Nala* – Walk and Canter – are treated to philosophy and cultural critique, as well as practical information about horse-keeping. "In Ottoman culture, as on the Central Asian steppe, enquiring about your name entailed, both literally and figuratively, enquiring about your horse," says Başdoğan. Turks were a nomadic people, an equestrian people, who depended intimately on their horses for survival. "It is an important but often overlooked part of Turkish identity these days," Başdoğan continues: "We forget to our cost how important was the idea of freedom of movement on horseback. Horses were our wings. As with the Prophet's ascent during the *mi'raj*, borne towards heaven by the winged horse Burak, so also with us, unless we forget and allow our wings to be clipped."

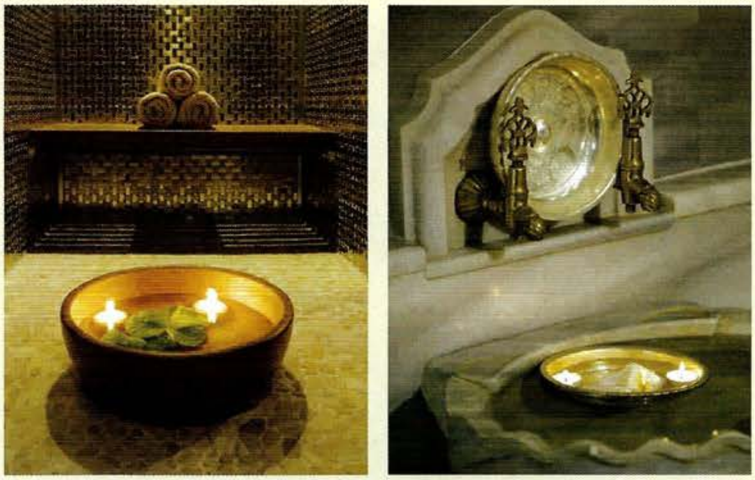
At Karacabey, at least, there seems little danger of the joy of free forward movement being forgotten. On both sides of the highway, canny grooms, vets, owners and prospective owners watch the youngsters at play in the vast paddocks, searching the new generation for evidence of "nobility" – speed, intelligence, leadership, and competitive or sporting spirit. ◆

Donna Landry's *Noble Brutes: How Eastern Horses Transformed English Culture* will be published by The Johns Hopkins University Press in 2008. With Caroline Finkel, Gerald MacLean, Andrew Byfield and Mahir Başdoğan, she is one of the organisers of the Great Anatolian Ride in the hoofprints of Evliya Çelebi. For details, cornucopia.net



FURTHER INFORMATION

- Karacabey is an hour's drive from Bursa and 45 minutes from Bandırma. For high-speed ferries from Istanbul, see ido.com.tr.
- TIGEM's Arabian stud: arrange visits through the Ankara office: +90 312 425 3814 or /418 8119, tigem.gov.tr.
- TJK Karacabey's Thoroughbred stud: arrange visits through the Turkish Jockey Club's Istanbul office, +90 212 570 7242 or iad@tjk.org.
- For racing news, see tjk.org.



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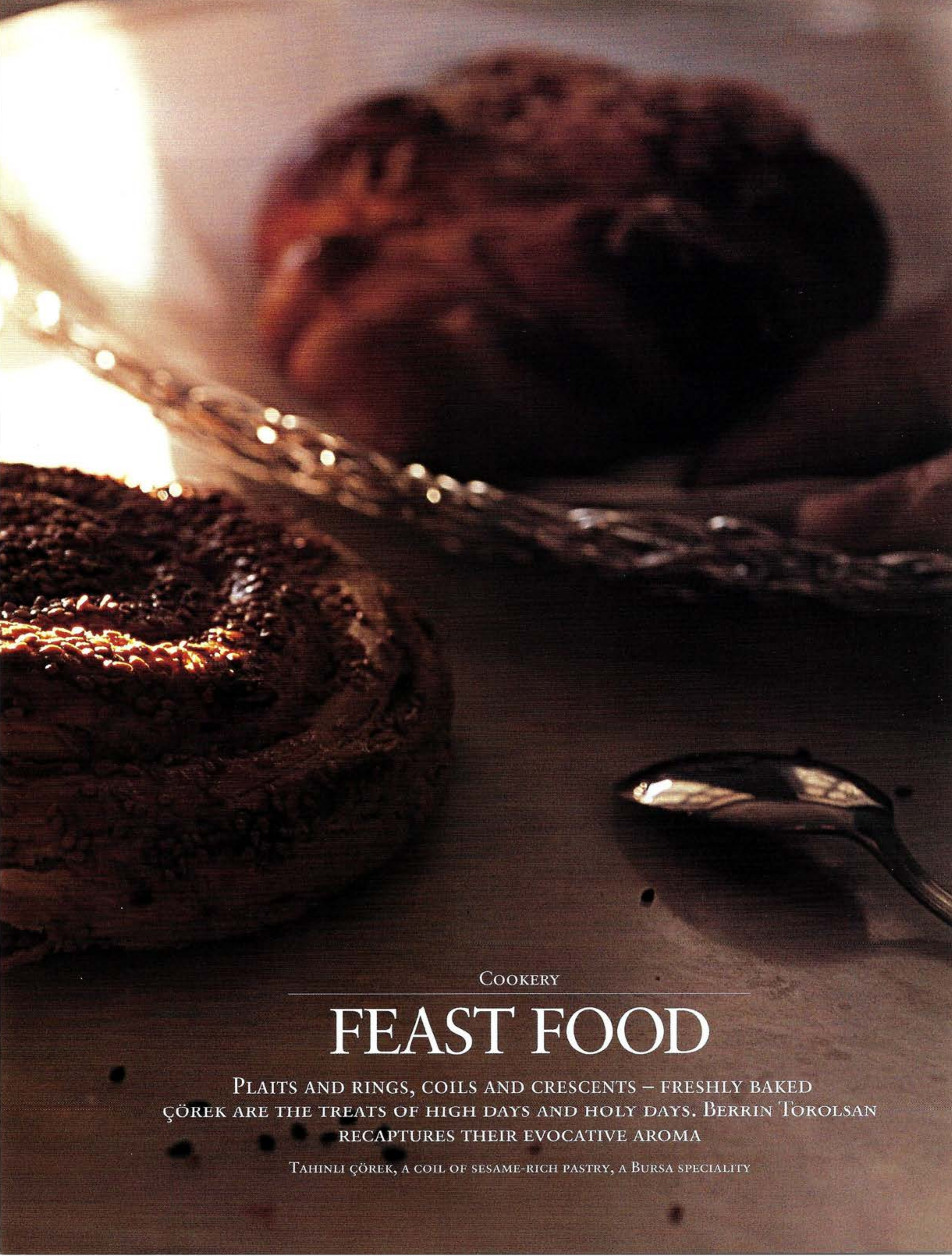
BERRIN TOROLSAN



Cookery

FEAST FOOD

Plaits and rings, coils and crescents – freshly baked çörek are the treats of high days and holy days. Berrin Torolsan recaptures their evocative aroma

Tahinli çörek, a coil of sesame-rich pastry, a Bursa speciality

KANDIL ÇÖREĞI, BAKED FOR HOLY DAYS WITH MAHLEP, POWDERED WILD-CHERRY KERNEL

Coming home from school as children, we could tell at once when that evening was a holy night – *kandil* – from the irresistible scent lingering in the street. The source of the aroma was the shop on the corner, baking *çörek*. Wrapped in colourful tissue-paper, each parcel would contain ten little pastry rings: five *kandil simit* covered with sesame and five *kandil çörek*, egg-glazed and sprinkled with black nigella seeds. Still warm, they would be slightly salty, very crisp and utterly delicious.

Both sweet and savoury – though nowadays more often savoury – *çörek* is a yeast-based pastry that comes in many different shapes and varieties, from crisp biscuits to spongy buns. In old cookery books it belonged to the chapter on bread and *börek* pastries. The *çörek* seems to go back to quite early times. The Central Asian Mahmud of Kashgar lists the word in his lexicon of Turkic languages in 1073, reporting that it is in use in the Chagatay, Azerbaijan, Ahiska and Crimean dialects. Today it is in regular use in Istanbul Turkish, as is another word in his eleventh-century lexicon, the verb *çöreklenmek*, meaning to coil or wind.

All this would suggest that, for a thousand years or so, the shape of a *çörek* has been pretty consistent. The ingredients have doubtless changed down the centuries, and from region to region, but *çörek* is made with a dough – yeast-leavened or unleavened, and enriched with butter, fat or oil – which is soft and pliable enough to be shaped into strands that can be coiled (*tahinli çörek*), plaited (*paskalya çöreği*) or twisted into rings (*kandil çöreği*).

The coiled *tahinli çörek*, as it is known in Istanbul, a yeast dough kneaded with sesame oil (*tahin*), was prepared in Antalya by the Christian Karamanlıs before Christmas and during Lent. At Easter our Greek neighbours in Istanbul would send us gorgeous plaited loaves of *paskalya çöreği*, with a red-tinted egg in the centre. This *çörek* was so loved by everybody, whatever their faith, that it is now baked all the year round, without the egg, and sold in every *pastahane* under the same name, *paskalya* (Easter) *çöreği*. In turn, *kandil çöreği* were also shared with the neighbours, distributed by children, and eaten only on the holy eves of the Islamic calendar known as *kandil*, meaning light, which occur five times in a lunar year.

AY ÇÖREĞI: CRESCENT MOONS WITH A FILLING OF WALNUTS, SULTANAS AND CINNAMON

The *çörek*, in short, is full of symbolism, and its association with religious festivals reflects earlier pagan customs. All sorts of buns, loaves and *çörek* are eaten at Sabantoy, the colourful June festival celebrated by the Altay, Çuvaş, Tatar and Başkurt peoples of Central Asia, which has parallels with Easter and other spring festivals. Wearing their loveliest traditional costumes, participants feast, drink, dance, sing and have lots of fun.

One of the pleasures of travelling in Turkey today is discovering each city's special *çörek* – they always make handy, inexpensive snacks. Amasya, for instance, has wonderful walnut *çörek*. Bursa does marvellous *tahinli* (sesame) *çörek* – a meal in itself. This must always have been the case, for *çörek*-bakers, like bakers of biscuits and *böreks*, were considered an independent trade, distinct from bread-bakers. The flour differed, and even the fuel to heat the ovens. While bread was baked in an oven fired by hornbeam logs, *çörek* bakeries used twigs – one donkey-load a day. In the old days, the

Ottoman authorities had to take bread – indeed everything made with flour, the staple diet – very seriously if they were to maintain public order. Bakeries were checked regularly. Grand viziers and sultans as late as the nineteenth century would pay incognito visits to different parts of the city. Ingredients, weight, taste and shape were strictly controlled. Every year the guild would present samples to a jury of experts, representatives of both the trade and consumers, who would judge them and agree on prices.

Evliya Çelebi tells us in the 1650s that there were 200 *çörek*-bakers (*çörekçiyan*) in Istanbul. He describes how in the processions of the guilds, ten pairs of bakers passed through the streets, each carrying on their shoulders a pole threaded with *çörek* rings, variously decorated with saffron, sesame or nigella seeds. These would then be distributed among the spectators at the end of the procession.

Çörek toppings vary according to what is available, as described by Evliya nearly three centuries ago. The most favoured of all, the aromatic black seeds of the plant *Nigella sativa* – known to English gardeners as love-in-a-mist for its delicate pale blue flowers – even acquired its Turkish name, *çörek otu*, from its extensive use on these pastries. The German name for these seeds, *Schwarzkümmel* – probably introduced to German-speaking people during one of the sieges of Vienna – gave birth to a sixteenth-century insult *Kümmeltürke,* literally "nigella Turks", a phrase now used to denote an ignorant, boastful person. The Turks still seem to believe in the seeds' magical, health-giving properties. They love to quote a *hadith* that they are a cure for all ills except death. And indeed recent research confirms nigella's ability to stimulate the immune system.

Today in Istanbul, whenever I see barrows in the street piled high with rainbows of colourful paper parcels wrapped around ten crisp *çörek* rings, it never fails to cheer me. I don't know how good they are, but the sight is enough to take me straight back to my childhood.

Ay Çöreği
Walnut Crescents

3 cups (about 250g) flour
1 dessertspoon dry yeast
2 tablespoons sugar
1/2 teaspoon salt
4 tablespoons lukewarm milk
50g butter (melted)
1 egg (lightly beaten)

Filling:
1 1/2 cups (125g) walnuts (ground)
1 1/2 cups (125g) sultanas (rinsed)
Grated zest of one orange or lemon
3 tablespoons sugar
1 dessertspoon cinnamon powder

These crescent *çörek* are appetising, nutritious and, with a cup of tea or coffee, a wonderful pick-me-up. They are also fun to prepare. The quantities above make eight crescents.

1 In a mixing bowl combine the flour, yeast, sugar and salt and sift the mixture onto a work surface. Make a well in the centre, add the milk, butter and most of the egg, reserving a little for the glaze. Knead into a soft, smooth dough. (If it is too stiff, add a little more milk; if the dough sticks, work in a little more flour – it should have the texture of an earlobe). Shape the dough into a ball, cover and leave in a warm place for one to two hours to rise. Alternatively place it in the oven at the lowest setting.

2 While the dough is proving, prepare the filling. Mix the walnuts, sultanas, orange or lemon zest and sugar, and sprinkle the mixture with cinnamon powder. To moisten and combine the ingredients, spoon in a little extra milk and set aside.

3 When the dough has almost doubled in size, pat it in your palms into a cylinder roughly two fingers thick. Slice crosswise into eight even pieces. Shape each piece into a ball, flatten and, with a rolling pin, roll into a round. Spoon the walnut filling into the middle, spreading it slightly. Starting from one side, roll up the dough like a cigar, gently stretch the ends and pinch the tips to seal. Repeat with the remaining pieces. Transfer to a greased baking tray, turn the ends inwards to create crescents and leave to rise again for 20–30 minutes.

4 Brush the tops with the remaining egg and bake in a moderate oven until golden.

Kandil Çöreği
Kandil Rings

1 cup natural yoghurt
1 cup olive oil
1 cup butter (melted)
3 cups (about 250g) flour
1 dessertspoon mahlep powder
2 teaspoons salt
1 dessertspoon sugar
1 egg (lightly beaten)
Nigella seeds to garnish

As their name suggests, these crisp rings are baked, along with sesame rings, to celebrate the holy *kandil* nights of the Islamic calendar. *Mahlep* or *mahalep* is an aromatic obtained from the kernels of the wild cherry *Prunus mahaleb*, a native of Turkey which grows wild on the high plateaux of the Black Sea. Mahlep has wholesome properties and was much favoured by Ottoman pastry chefs. The indispensable *çörek otu* – *Nigella sativa* – is likewise beneficial to health and is even credited with magical powers.

1 In a mixing bowl combine the yoghurt, olive oil and butter. Mix the flour with the mahlep powder, salt and sugar and sift into the bowl. Knead briefly to form an elastic, silky dough. Shape it into a ball and store, covered, to firm up in the fridge for at least half an hour, or until needed.

2 From the chilled dough take a piece the size of a ping-pong ball and roll it between your palms into a finger-thick rope. Make a ring and seal the two meeting ends by gently pressing them together. Arrange each ring on a previously buttered tray.

3 Brush the rings with the beaten egg and sprinkle with nigella seeds. Allow the *çörek* to rest in the fridge for a further half an hour before you bake them in a moderate oven for about 20 minutes.

A NOTE ON YEAST: The recipes given here use instant dry yeast. If you are using fresh or compressed yeast, the quantities are roughly the same, but fresh yeast needs to be dissolved beforehand in a little warm water sweetened with a teaspoon of sugar. In ten minutes the yeast will froth up, a sign that it is active and ready for use. The yeast mixture should be stirred in with the other liquid ingredients.

Paskalya Çöreği
Easter Loaf

3 cups (about 250g) flour

1 dessertspoon dry yeast

5 tablespoons sugar

1 dessertspoon mahlep powder

A pinch of salt

2–3 mastic resin drops (pounded with a little sugar to a powder)

1 egg (separated)

1/2 cup lukewarm milk

3–4 tablespoons butter (melted)

Nigella seeds or flaked hazelnuts to garnish

Another *çörek* with a spiritual tradition. In the old days, *paskalya çöreği* used to be baked in Istanbul at Easter, hence the name. Nowadays it is sold throughout the year. Unfortunately, only a few bakers still use mastic – drops of crystalised resin from the Mediterranean mastic tree, *Pistacia lentiscus*. This is a shame as its refreshing aroma makes all the difference. If you don't have enough time to make a plait, simply bake it in a circular bread tin as a plain, round loaf.

1 Mix the flour with the yeast, sugar, mahlep, salt and mastic, and sift onto a work surface. Make a well in the centre. Separate the egg, reserving the yolk, and add the egg white to the well, along with the milk and butter. Knead the dough for about five minutes until evenly textured. Shape it into a ball, cover and leave to rise in a warm place for one to two hours.

2 When the dough has doubled in volume, tip it onto a working surface, knead lightly and divide into three even pieces. Then roll each piece with your palm into a long strand.

3 Lay the three strands next to each other on a baking tin lined with greaseproof paper. Starting from the centre, lay them over and over each other to make a plait. Stretch them lightly as you move towards the ends. Pinch the ends and tuck them under the plait. Leave, covered, for 15–20 minutes to prove and plump up.

4 Lightly whisk the egg yolk and use it to glaze the loaf. Decorate the top with a sprinkling of nigella seeds or flaked hazelnuts and bake until it is golden and fills the house with its delicious aroma.

Tahinli Çörek
Sesame Coils

1 1/2 cups (about 125g) flour

1/2 dessertspoon dry yeast

1 tablespoon sugar

1 teaspoon salt

1/2 glass lukewarm milk or water

1 tablespoon olive oil

Filling:

2 tablespoons tahin (sesame-seed oil)

2 tablespoons pekmez (grape molasses) or honey

1 tablespoon icing sugar (if not using honey)

Sesame seeds to garnish

This *çörek* from Bursa made with sesame oil (*tahin*) is also popular in Istanbul.

1 Mix the flour with the yeast, sugar and salt and sift onto a work surface. Make a well in the centre and stir in the milk or water and olive oil. Knead the dough until evenly textured. Cover and leave the dough to rise for one to two hours.

2 Prepare the filling by blending the *tahin* with the *pekmez* and icing sugar (if using honey, omit the sugar).

3 When the dough has risen and doubled in volume, knead it lightly and shape into a cylinder. Cut into two, then halve again into four equal pieces. Roll out each piece to a circle. Spread the filling with the back of a spoon. Starting from one corner, roll up the circle like a cigar. Taper and stretch it to a thin rope. Coil it and place on a greased baking tray. Tuck the ends under the coil. Repeat with the remaining three pieces.

4 Brush the coils with a little milk, or simply water, and sprinkle liberally with sesame seeds. Allow to rise again.

5 Bake in a hot oven until crisp.

Açma
Knotted Bread Rings

1 1/2 cups (about 125g) flour

1 dessertspoon dry yeast

3 dessertspoons sugar

1 teaspoon salt

2 tablespoons olive oil

1/2 cup lukewarm water

1 tablespoon soft butter

Yolk of 1 egg (beaten) or milk for glazing

Nigella seeds to garnish

The name *açma*, literally to open, comes from the knack that bakers acquire of opening up and stretching dough. They pick it up and with a deft rotating movement fling it back down onto a marble worktop, transforming it into a thin circle ready to be folded. With a piece of cheese, this delicious pastry makes a whole meal.

1 Sift the flour with the yeast, sugar and salt into a bowl. Make a well in the centre, add the oil and water and knead to a dough until shiny and smooth. Grease a large dinner plate with a few drops of olive oil. Transfer the dough to the oiled plate and flatten it, working from the centre outwards with your hands, stretching it as much as possible. Brush the surface with oil or butter. Fold the four corners over, like an envelope, cover with an upturned bowl and leave to rise.

2 When the dough has risen, divide and shape it into four equal balls.

3 Take a ball, flatten it and roll out into a thin circle roughly the size of a dinner plate. (In a professional's hands this is when the dough starts flying.) Spread the circle liberally with butter, fold over two sides to create a rectangle, then roll it into a cylinder. Holding this by the ends, wind it into a ring, tucking the end underneath in a very loose knot. Transfer to a greased baking tray, brush the top with egg glaze or milk and decorate sparingly with nigella seeds. Repeat with the other three balls of dough.

4 Let the *açmas* rest and plump up before baking in a hot oven for about 20 minutes.

Haşhaşli Çörek
Poppy-seed Buns

3 cups (about 250g) flour

1/2 tablespoon dry yeast

1 dessertspoon sugar

2 teaspoons salt

2 tablespoons butter (melted)

1/2 cup lukewarm milk

1 egg (beaten)

Filling:

5 tablespoons poppy seeds

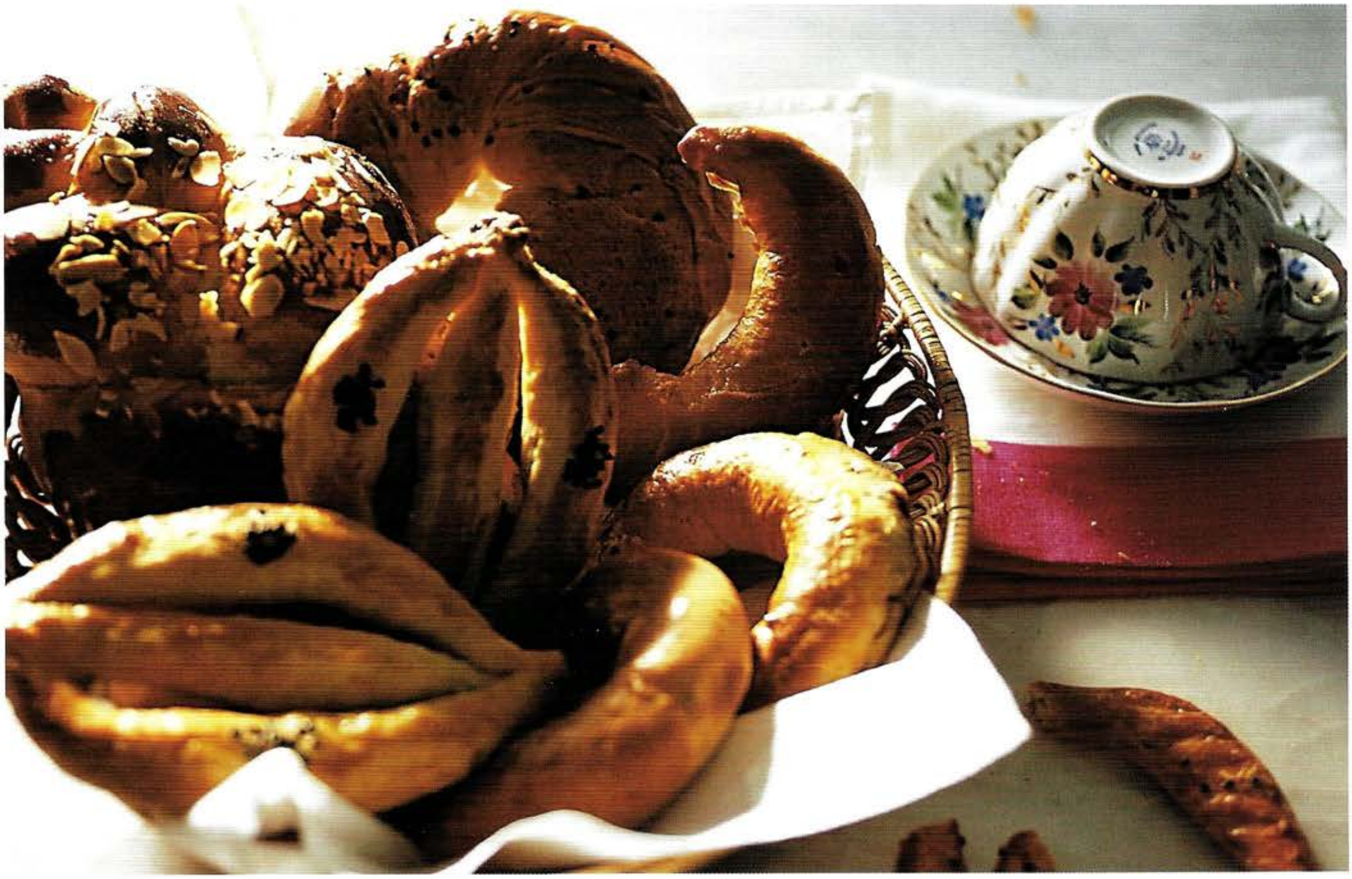
2 or 3 tablespoons sugar

1 cup walnuts (ground)

Olive oil

These buns are from Afyon, where poppies play an important role in the cuisine. Poppy seeds decorate loaves and poppy-seed oil is used for cooking.

1 Mix the flour with the yeast, sugar



A BASKETFUL OF ÇÖREK, INCLUDING ÇATAL ÇÖREK (BOTTOM LEFT), PASKALYA ÇÖREĞI (TOP LEFT), AÇMA (CENTRE, BACK) AND AY ÇÖREĞI

and salt, and sift them into a bowl. Make a well in the centre, add the butter, milk and half the beaten egg. Knead for about five minutes, until the dough is silky. If it is too firm, add a little more milk. Shape it into a ball and leave in a warm place to rise.

2 Meanwhile prepare the filling. Roast the poppy seeds in a frying pan, stirring constantly. Reserve a spoonful for the topping, and in a mortar pound the rest to a paste. Stir in the sugar and ground walnuts, adding a little hot water to soften the paste. Set aside.

3 Transfer the risen dough onto a lightly floured surface. Knead slightly and pat into a rectangle. Brush the top with a little extra olive oil and spread the filling evenly over it. Roll into a cylinder, pressing the seam to seal. Cut crosswise into even slices.

4 Arrange the slices in a buttered baking tin, cut sides up. Mix the rest of the beaten egg with a little milk and pour over. Sprinkle with the reserved poppy seeds. Leave the *çöreks* to plump up for a further half hour, before baking them in a hot oven for 30 minutes.

5 To eat, pull the buns apart with your hands rather than slicing them.

ÇATAL ÇÖREK
FORKED PASTRY

5 tablespoons milk
5 tablespoons olive oil
3 tablespoons butter (melted)
1 1/2 cups (about 125g) flour
1 dessertspoon mahlep powder
2 teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon sugar
1 teaspoon baking powder
Egg yolk (lightly beaten)
Nigella seeds to garnish

These crisp, salty *çörek* are made from unleavened dough and taste similar to *kandil* rings. Along with *açmas*, they are one of the classics of the *çörek* repertoire and should melt in the mouth. Almost every patisserie shop in Istanbul sells them. The quantities above make three handsome specimens.

1 In a mixing bowl combine the milk, olive oil and melted butter. Sift the flour with the *mahlep*, salt, sugar and baking powder into the bowl.
Mix and knead briefly to form a soft dough. Shape it into a ball, cover and store in the fridge for half an hour or until needed.

2 From the chilled dough take a piece roughly the size of an egg, divide it into three even pieces and shape each one into a stick. Lay the three sticks side by side on a paper-lined baking tray, two fingers apart. Pinch the ends together to seal.

3 When all the *çörek* are ready, brush them with the egg yolk. Draw the prongs of a fork through the egg glaze to decorate. Sprinkle with nigella seeds. Bake in a heated moderate oven for 15 to 20 minutes. ◆

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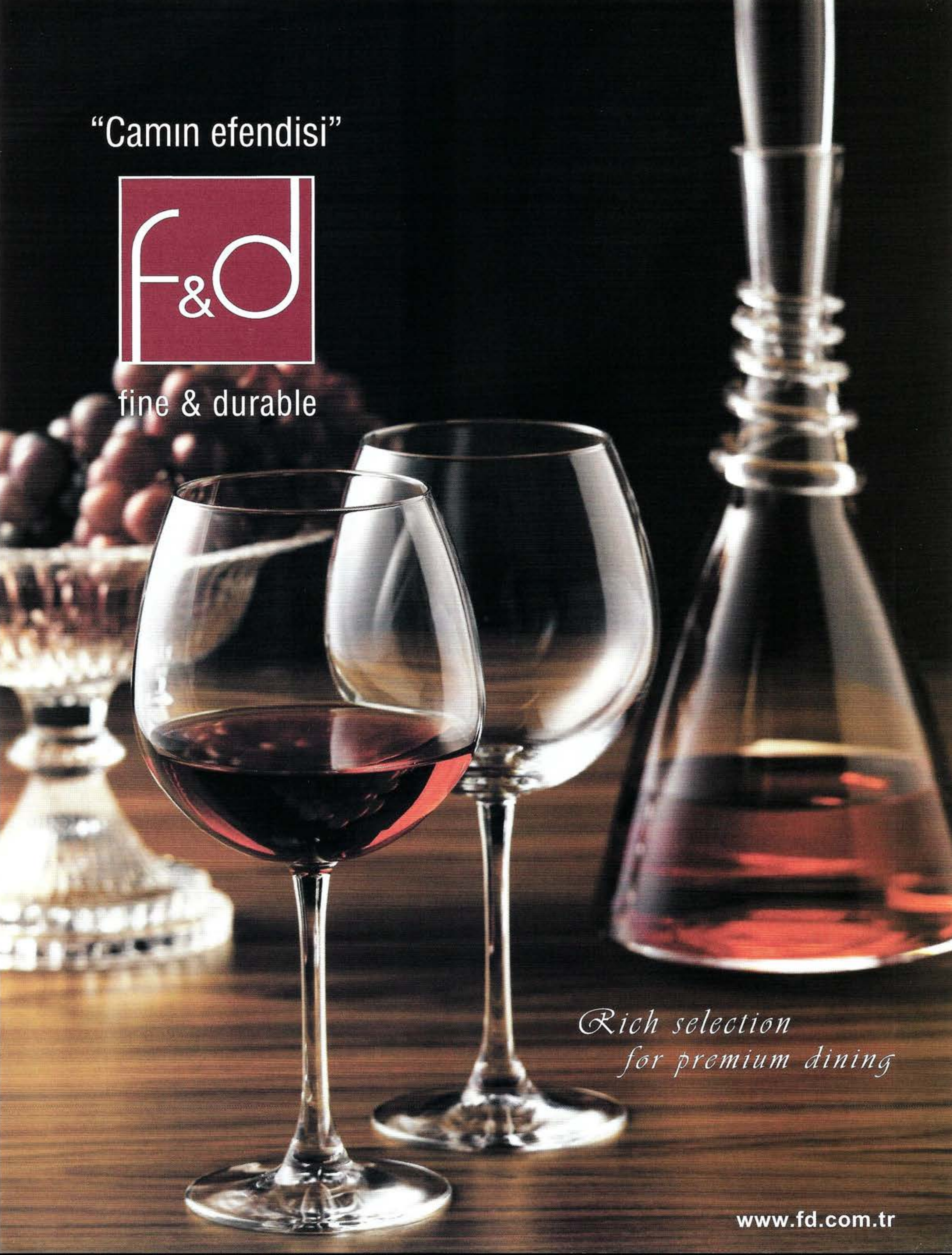
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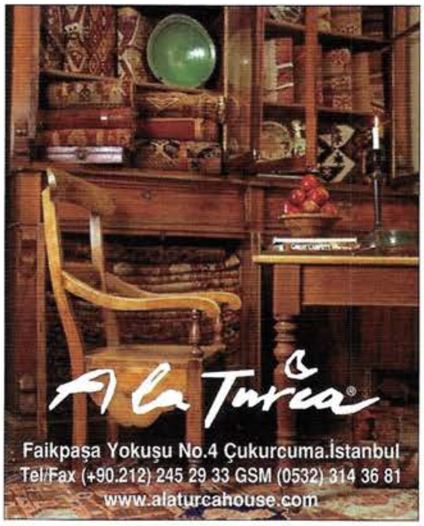

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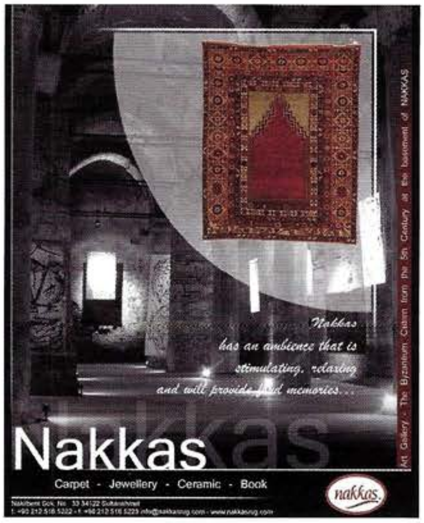

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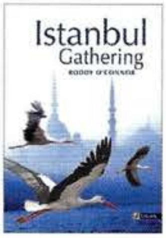

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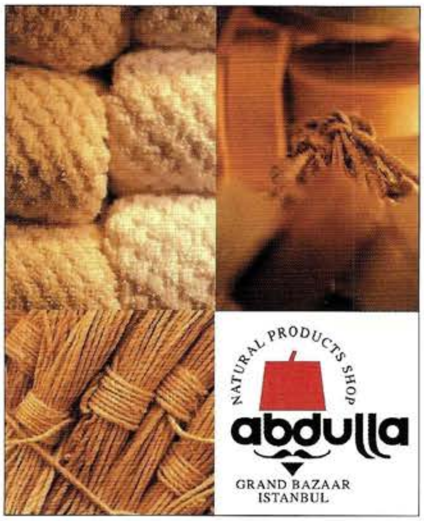

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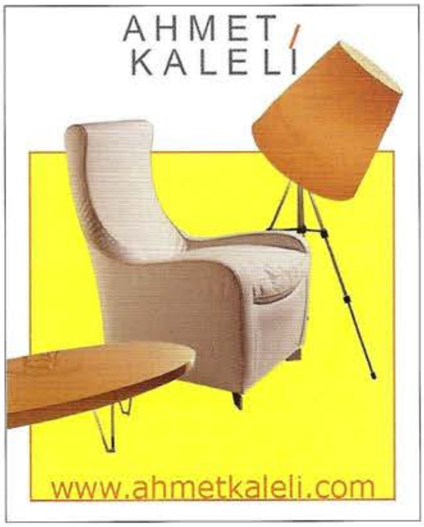

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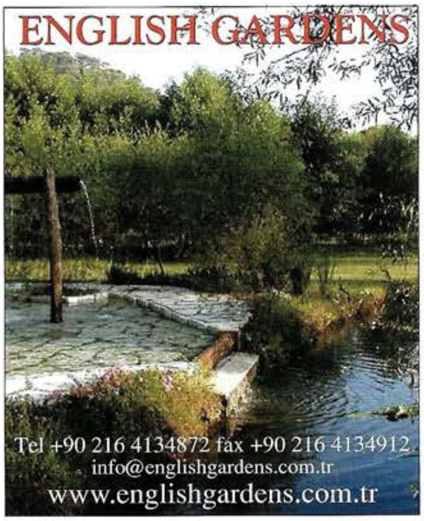

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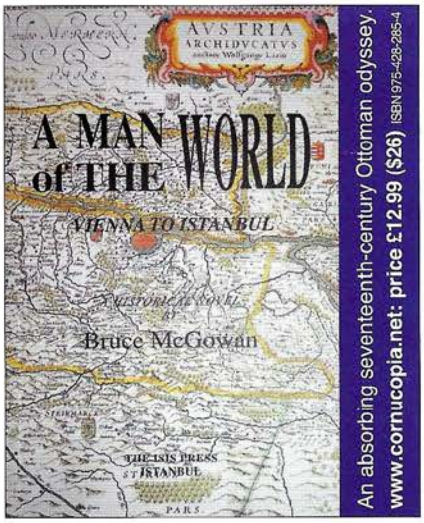

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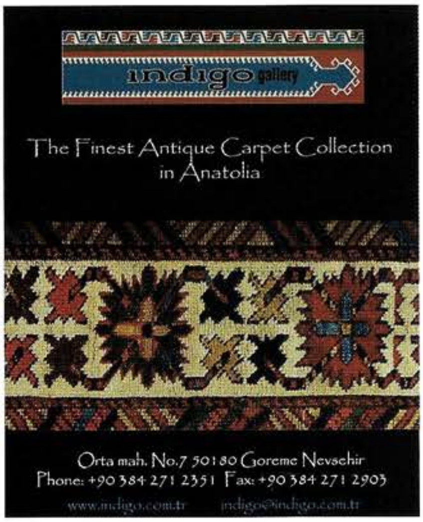

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Rocks and roses

HAVING MARVELLED AT ANKARA, MIN HOGG SETS OFF FOR THE FAMILIAR LUNAR LANDSCAPE OF CAPPADOCIA. THERE SHE IS BEGUILED BY SMALL FRESCOED CHURCHES, THE PERFECT CAVE DWELLING AND TEMPTING TEAS ON DAPPLED TERRACES

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MIN HOGG

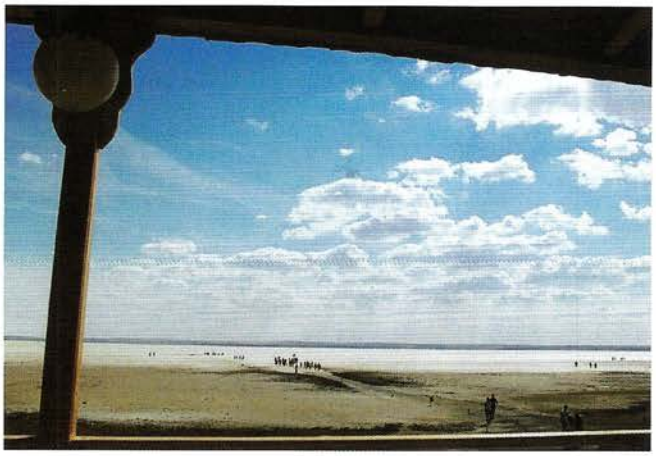
Ankara, source of the fluffy wool from its eponymous rabbits, is a surprise. Far from my imagined flat, soulless seat of government and diplomacy, it swoops up and down and in and out, a hotchpotch of smallish hills with grassy countryside beyond visible from almost everywhere.

We are en route for Cappadocia but there is just time to descend on the marvel-filled, international-prize-winning Museum of Anatolian Civilisations near the Citadel, where hand-picked top treasures covering the entire history of the region, from the Palaeolithic of three million years ago to the Classical period, are set out chronologically in a ten-domed fifteenth-century market building. The joy of having Attila as our guide becomes apparent at once. He is that rarity among guides: someone whose knowledge and sheer enthusiasm are instantly infectious. There is nothing he cannot explain and amplify upon in an absorbing way – a gift that was ever more admired as the trip progressed.

You could spend days in this museum, with its beaten gold, marbles, tools, jewellery, cloth, ceramics and furniture, but we must make time for lunch in Çengelhan, the ancient leather merchants' caravansaray round the corner, restored by Rahmi Koç and opened in 2005 as an industrial museum and restaurant combined.

You arrive into its double-height brick and stone central courtyard, now glass-roofed, where the tables and chairs are set out. All round the perimeter, and under a colonnaded gallery with 100 rooms off, are exhibits from Mr Koç's astounding collections. The man must have shopped from morning to night to have amassed such a huge and varied agglomeration of what can best be described as interesting and weird things. Kemal Atatürk memorabilia have a whole room to themselves, Ankara being the town he chose for his headquarters in 1920 and his capital in 1923. Among his furniture are his toothpicks, his pristine silk shirts with separate collars, his porcelain tea sets and grooming implements in velvet-lined boxes. To give an all-too-truncated list of other exhibits in the museum, there is a Model-T Ford, a small black Hindustani dugout canoe, early televisions, radios, model boats and trains, light bulbs, automata, stuffed animals, tin toys, cooking utensils, lace and sewing machines. It is an ideal place to release the children while you, as we did, have lunch. The bread cooked before our eyes is that heavenly combination of crusty to bite and soft to chew; our baskets have to be replenished several times, it is so good. Other highlights include the lamb dolmas and chickpea-sized ravioli which exploded in the mouth with a chicken filling. After congratulations to the jolly chef, we leave for the long drive to Cappadocia.

Along many kilometres of rolling country with hills flattened by erosion, the sky is blue, the fields are golden with gently rippling corn, when all of a sudden a startling white line appears on the horizon. As the line increases in length, depth and intensity of sparkle, we know we are approaching Tuz Gölü, a salt lake 70km long. Black specks like a small swarm of ants turn out to be people walking out over the crystalline surface, and we pile out of the bus to join them. The salt crunches like snow beneath our feet and the dazzle is all but blinding. Slushy in winter when the lake is fed by surrounding rivers, every summer the salt dries out and is harvested. We buy little bags of salt and take tea at the café's terrace, blinking in the glare.



LEFT: TUZ GÖLÜ, THE BLINDING SALT LAKE EAST OF ANKARA. IN SUMMER THE SALT CRUNCHES UNDERFOOT LIKE SNOW. ABOVE RIGHT: A VIEW OF THE TUFA ROCKS OF PIGEON VALLEY, NEAR UÇHISAR, SEEN THROUGH A PERGOLA COVERED IN VINES AND DOUBLE ROSES

Dwindling rays of evening sun were bathing Göreme (St Jerome) in gold. Huge cones

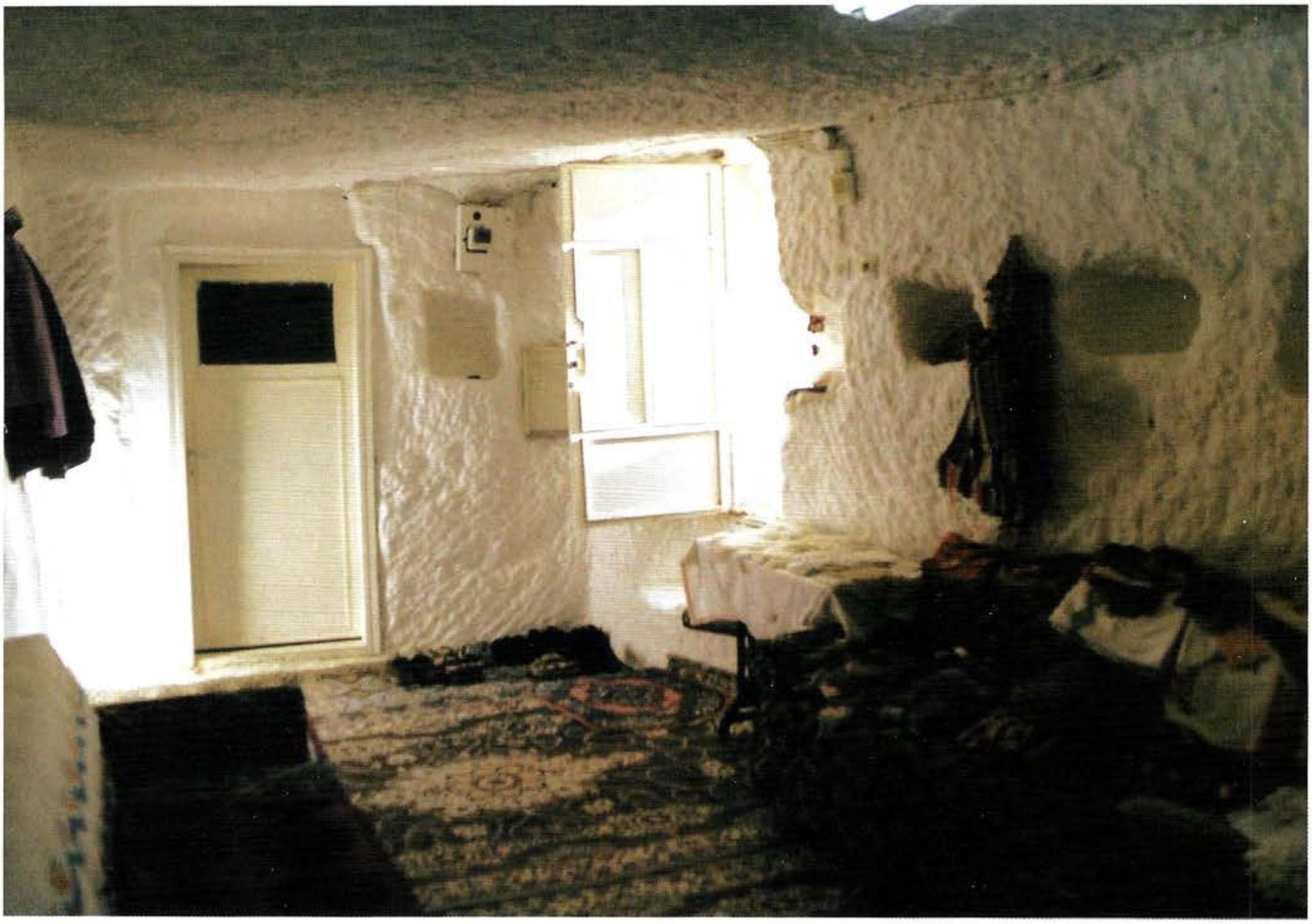
of rock – some half merged into the cliffs, some free-standing – are hollowed out and form the basis of much housing in this little town at the heart of Cappadocia's valleys, with their fabled rock formations.

Our hotel, the Anatolian Houses, is a clutch of buildings and habitable cones gathered together and restored by a local carpet dealer. It produces whoops of delight from our travel-weary group. In the forecourt, with its lawns and flowers and a small discreet pool, dozens of stone staircases rise in every direction up to the bedrooms, each decorated a little dubiously in a different theme but with impeccable plumbing. Mine, pantingly high up, was a tower partly carved out of the cliff and partly built; there was a painted ribbed wooden ceiling, a pearl-encrusted bedcover and a whirlpool bath into which I sank gratefully.

The following days are spent exploring the Cappadocia valleys on foot, by bus and, for some, by balloon at dawn, which is reported to be a glorious out-of-body experience. I manage only to listen to the low hiss of gas burners as they sail over the hotel well before breakfast time.

The valleys are nicknamed for English-speakers the Cat, the Honey, the White, the Rose, the Red, the Love and the Sword, and each has its own strange-to-the-point-of-disbelief rock formation. I'm sure there is nothing half as good on the moon. At first glance you are so bewitched you may not notice that the cliff walls and crags of stone are riddled with windows, door openings, flights of steps, columns or pigeon holes. Some rocks resemble immense toadstools, the stems capped by discs of harder stone balancing precariously until wind and rain erosion topple them to the ground. Others are pale lava whipped up like soft peaks of beaten egg white, or are fluted cliff sides turreted along the top like a fairy-tale castle. There is even a rock like a mammoth kneeling camel and another like a pigeon.

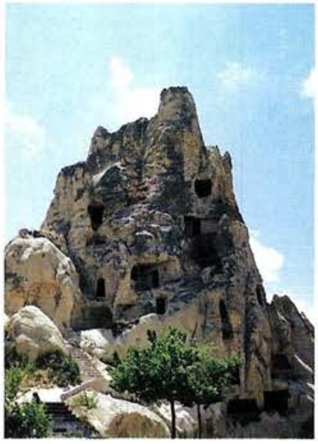
Aware as we are that this whole area, strategically placed on the Silk Route, has ootprints left behind by many a civilisation, it still strikes me as strange, in a country that long



ago embraced Islam, to find so many touching little Christian churches, with their naive frescoes preserved from as far back as the fifth century. Nearly all the valleys have these churches gouged into the soft tufa rock; they are often approachable by wildly vertiginous flights of steps, and the only light source is from the open cave mouth. Attila shames us by being able to identify the apostles, saints and Holy Family and the Emperor Constantine far quicker than we can.

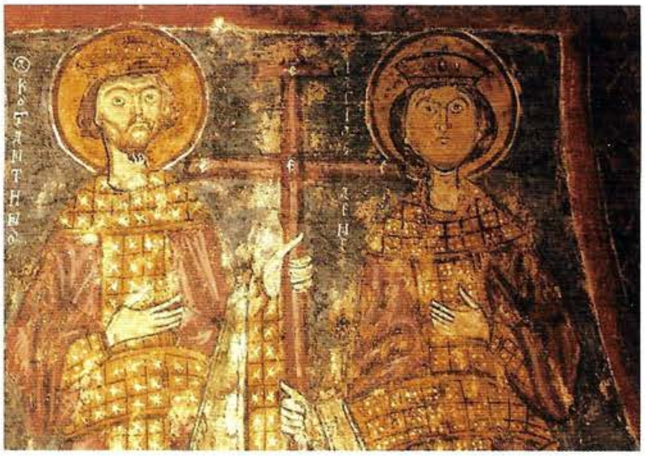
The large troglodyte complex founded in the third century by St Basil in what is named the Open Air Museum, just outside Göreme, is an excellent first stop to get one's eye in. There is a convent, a monastery with a stone refectory table as good as new, dozens of minute frescoed chapels, wineries, grain stores and all the necessities of a religious community.

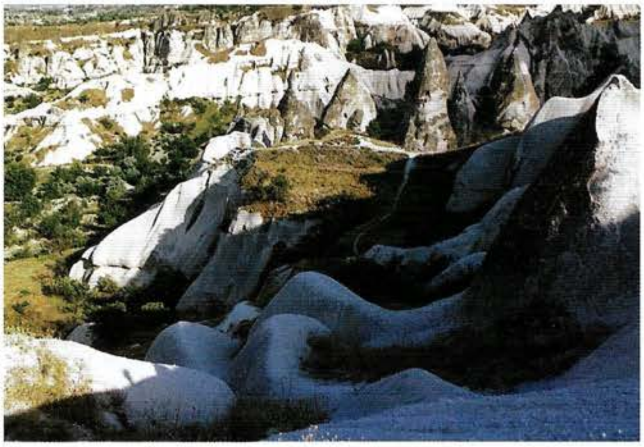
Beside the road between Göreme and Tatların there is an unaccountably spacious jewellery shop in the middle of absolutely nowhere. We stop only to use their high-class plumbing; in fact we stop there in passing for the same purpose so often, it is highly embarrassing, until one of us spots a perfect turquoise christening present to buy and honour is satisfied.



TOP: A LIVING CAPPADOCIAN HOUSE WITH LONG DIVANS AND USEFUL NICHES.
ABOVE LEFT: CAVE DWELLINGS IN UÇHISAR. ABOVE: A CHURCH GUARDIAN MAKES TEA.
OPPOSITE, FROM TOP: A FRESCO OF CONSTANTINE AND HIS MOTHER IN A CAVE CHURCH IN GÖREME; THE ARCHES OF TOKALI CHURCH, CARVED FROM TUFA; A VOLUPTUOUS LANDSCAPE

At Tatların there is a city behind the rock face where 30,000 people could live, or hide if necessary. The honeycombs of rooms and passages are all there, but exploring the interior is only for the reckless. I attempted a rustic wooden ladder with rungs set at least half a metre apart leading to the start of a near-vertical staircase with nothing but





PHOTOGRAPHS BY MIN HOGG

shallow hand grips carved into the side walls to hoist oneself up. I had to retreat. Many of the caves are still in use and rented out as safe storage for grain, a cheese similar to Roquefort and wine.

Later we gorge ourselves on a splendid blow-out tea on a terrace at Uçhisar overlooking Pigeon Valley, where the birds were farmed by the thousand, roosting in man-made holes. We also visited one of the very few cave houses still inhabited, and sat on divans inside, chatting to the owner's wife in her baggy trousers and white scarf while her husband relaxed under a vine-covered pergola surrounded by double pink roses and a fine view of the valley. Their grown-up children had dropped by, and plainly have no intention of cave-dwelling in the future, whereas if I needed a Turkish country retreat I would choose this one like a shot.

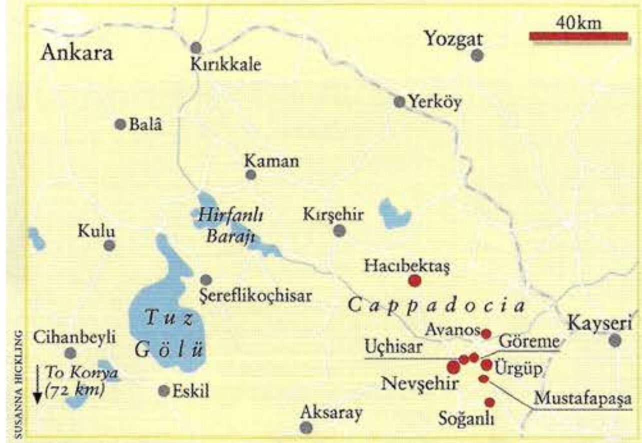
In the mosque at Hacıbektaş, families were circling the tomb of Hacı Bektaş Veli on their knees. So revered is this mystic and political teacher that 100,000 disciples gather every August to venerate the man who in the thirteenth century preached a dervish religion unifying Islam (both Sunni and Shiite) with Christianity, but with less austerity than any of them. In the dervish pilgrim's house there is a slightly down-at-heel museum, but I admired the pale pink interior of a glass-fronted cupboard displaying dark metal lamps, lanterns, dishes and delicately fluted water jugs.

Somewhat off the beaten track, at Soğanlı, are a couple of the most delightfully secret valleys – with any luck you will have the place to yourself. Before clambering up the rocky hillside to explore the caves and churches, it is an absolute must to stop for tea in dappled shade at the restaurant. In no time at all a granny will emerge offering the dolls in Turkish dress for which this place is renowned, and only those with hearts of stone could resist. Soon a dozen or more girls and women will be calling out from a little way off, and as their prices plummet there seems no point in holding back.

Nearby, in the unspoilt farming village of Ortahisar, there are a few dusty antique shops, one manned by Crazy Ali, a poet who dispenses copies of his work in English: "One star slipping down your eyelash..." There is also a folk museum of tableaux showing aspects of village life – birth, betrothal, baking, the harvest and so on.

Food everywhere in Cappadocia is delicious, if frankly over-abundant, and none more so than on our last day in Mustafapaşa at the Old Greek House, which, as it sounds, is an Ottoman Greek building. It has a pretty internal courtyard restaurant and a private dining room on the first floor where we lolled on cushions round the table and ate ourselves to a contented standstill – a perfect finale. ◆

Min Hogg is founder and editor-at-large of *The World of Interiors*



SUSANNA HICKLING

CAPPADOCIA NOTES

- For luxury, the Museum Hotel, Uçhisar is unbeatable (+90 384 219 2220, museum-hotel.com). Also fun is Anatolian Houses, Göreme, where Min Hogg's party stayed (+90 384 271 2463, anatolianhouses.com). Göreme's Elif Star Caves is an attractive pansiyon (elifstar.com).
- The best restaurant is the Elai in Uçhisar (+90 384 219 3181).
- The best walk is in Güllüdere Valley. Book a balloon through kapadokyaballoons.com. This is also a good area for riding (see CORNUCOPIA 35): Akhal Teke Horse Center, +90 384 511 5171.
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VILLAGE VOICES

Azize Ethem continues her Iznik diary, after a summer enlivened by a stream of entertaining guests, from a giant stork to a soap-opera film crew. Meanwhile, life in town is hotting up, with explosive weddings, rooftop dramas, and the latest style in meals on wheels

A summer of surprises

It was a long, hot summer, with sizzling August temperatures arriving in June. While Ankara and Istanbul have suffered water cuts, we still have an abundance of water, although the lake level has dropped a metre. My boat is sitting high and dry at its mooring, while Selim's larger craft is marooned in a puddle. Just outside our kitchen door we have an artesian well, which runs constantly. With water shortages on most of our guests' minds, we are repeatedly explaining why it is not a tap we can turn off.

Our fruit trees have thrived in the prolonged heat and I have run out of people I can offload boxes of plums on. The walnut tree has gone berserk and we are having to prop up its nut-laden branches. Yesterday Dorothy from one of the hill villages groaned and threw her hands in the air when I tried to fob off a load of fruit and vegetables on her. Every local guest brings us a gift of garden produce – we have enough olives to start a shop.

Our neighbour, the eccentric artist Zeki Fındıkoğlu, spent the summer working on his ten-metre ocean liner, which will hopefully be afloat by next summer. Once he had purchased a nail-cutting machine, the work began to move faster and the boat no longer looks like an inverted porcupine. Selim could be found most evenings working on a boat he built for a friend living further along the lake shore.

This spring a huge stork would visit our garden early each morning. Neither of us had ever seen one so enormous and Selim would regale guests with tales of our Goliath stork. But as nobody else was ever around when the bird strutted up and down our lawn, friends would tease us about our vivid imaginations. The thought of being able to show people a photograph of the giant bird spurred me to read the manual for our new camera and learn the basic steps for using the intimidating little machine. I emailed a friend a photo that not only had all of the stork in it but also the fence, which would give an idea of the size of the bird. Within a day I had a reply, complimenting us on the garden and saying that the concrete garden ornament looked almost lifelike.

It is no use, nobody is ever going to believe us.

Weddings that go with a bang

Summer is the time for weddings in Iznik. Our local brides don't spend hours deciding whether to have frills or flounces, lace, chiffon roses or beads. They opt for the lot. On Saturday and Sunday evenings the large tea-gardens on the lake-front become wedding-reception venues. The premises have to be large, as 500 guests is the norm. The bands all sport electric keyboards and drums, with huge speakers. The ear-splitting racket can be heard five miles down the lake. At some stage in the proceedings there is a short firework display. Simba the wonder dog hates the noise of the rockets and races to the gate to bark madly. He only has to bark for a minute and the explosions cease. Three or four times an evening he saunters back to the house satisfied that he has once more frightened the enemy away.

Professional suicide

There was much excitement in town on market day. Selim dropped me off near the vegetable market and drove further into town to park the car. Hurtling along with my shopping trolley, it was a while before I realised the market was almost deserted. With the trolley full, I headed off towards the centre of town to meet Selim for lunch. Turning into the main street I found it jam-packed with bodies. An ambulance and fire-engine blocked the road and people were shoulder to shoulder, gazing skyward.

At first I couldn't work out what the attraction was, but an excited woman wedged up against me pointed out a man on the flat roof of a half-completed four-storey building. He was hurling lumps of concrete, plastic piping and other building materials at the crowd, and screaming that he was in debt and was going to kill himself.

Nobody seemed to know who he was, which is extremely unusual around here. "How much debt?" someone yelled and after much toing and froing it was established that he owed 300 lira. A man in the crowd called out that he would give him the money, but then a second debt of 200 lira was declared. When another Iznik citizen offered to settle this, the two good Samaritans were told to get the money, as the distraught man leaned over the eaves and waved one foot into thin air.

With the money assembled, the man started down the stairs, only to be bundled off by the police. One policeman spoke to the benefactors, who then started to shout themselves. The crowd seemed to be becoming angry and I couldn't understand what was happening.

Even though it was all over, the crowd only thinned a little and it took me a while to reach the restaurant. How sad, I thought, that someone would end his life over such a small amount of money. Perhaps he was drunk.

At our favourite eatery the staff and customers were laughing as one of the waiters was imitating the foot-dangling drama. Really upset to see Selim joining in the mirth, I launched into a lecture about the tragedy of poverty. Halting me, Selim explained that, not for the first time, I had not got the whole story and had missed the punch line.

The man on the roof was a professional suicide, (or perhaps the word should be suicider). He would visit towns on market day and after only an hour's work would walk away with a nice wad of money in his pocket. Unfortunately for him, when a police officer newly appointed to Iznik recognised him, his lucrative career came to an abrupt end.

Turmoil? What turmoil?

I don't know if it is the same in other Turkish towns where the Sultan granted land to refugees, but here people still remember their roots. The descendants of the Georgians who came here over a hundred years ago still speak Georgian; they even have a Georgian social club. The Bulgarians, the Romany, Kurds and Bosnians are Iznikians and Turks but they retain the traditions of their past.

At election time the various candidates usually visit each group to solicit their votes. This election was different, the Western media portrayed Turkey as a country in turmoil, with the army ready to implement a coup any second. Well, if that was true it must all have been happening beyond Iznik. There were no rent-a-mob demonstrations, no clumps of men in suits rushing from one venue to the next. If it hadn't been for the few party flags strung from lamp-posts and a couple of vehicles blaring slogans, one wouldn't have known we were having an election. Perhaps it was just too hot to bother.

The Leaning Lamp of Iznik

Along with its historical sites, Iznik has the Leaning Football-Stadium Floodlight at the main crossroads – not exactly a draw on a par with the Leaning Tower of Pisa, but a worthy attempt. The Murat II Bath is looking magnificent now it has been restored. About twenty metres of the ancient Roman road running under our present thoroughfare has been uncovered. It is a strange feeling to stand on the old flagstones with the sound of cars overhead.

Just beyond the post office we have what must be the ugliest modern mosque on the face of the earth, and now we have a new attraction. Close to the Leaning Lamp we have a new restaurant. I am not an expert on bordello décor, but it looks as if the interior was taken straight from an old cowboy movie. The lolly-pink walls, tablecloths and curtains are accented by masses of blood-red plastic roses, which match the embroidered red roses on all the pink fabric. The frills have to be seen to be believed… I have never seen wall frills before.

I talked Selim into taking me there to eat one evening. It was wonderful and I yearn to go back. Unfortunately the food was dire, awful beyond description, so he won't entertain the idea of a second visit. To me it is worth munching on chips of wood disguised as *çöp şiş* just to imbibe the atmosphere.

Meals on wheels

The mayor has tried valiantly to keep alive the plants hanging in little pots from the fake olde-worlde lamp-posts. Most of them are burnt to a crisp, but he wouldn't dare to put the neon plastic ones back. Most of our dastardly speed bumps have disappeared, to be replaced by knobbly metal strips. Yet another supermarket has opened, bringing the number to four. A new tourist-information booth has been erected, close to the St Sophia Basilica.

Emin, who used to have a cart selling desserts, has hit the big time. A distinguished, well-dressed man in a spotless white coat, he looks more like a family doctor than a street trader. As none of our restaurants serve sweets, he would move his handcart from one restaurant to the next. If a customer wanted any of his wares a waiter would pop out and buy it. Now all the restaurants display Emin's delicacies, with deliveries twice a day. He must being doing well, because he now has a small car. From handcart to car in less than a year is not bad.

On the guest list

We have had an unprecedented number of guests this summer. One Turkish couple brought with them their fourteen-year-old son, who, they said, was fascinated by Ottoman history. The lad sat next to me and asked me fairly basic questions which weren't too difficult to answer. Gazing at me, he said that he had never before met anyone who knew Sultan Abdülhamit II personally. When I pointed out that the Sultan died 89 years ago, the horrid child just nodded.

One American couple were so anti-George Bush they told us amazing stories of mass murderers being released from prisons to join the military in Iraq. The very next day we had another American couple visit who were so pro-Bush that the husband commented that all the infidel Iraqi rats should be slaughtered. The palpable silence of the Muslim friends who had brought them to meet us didn't faze them as the wife seized the gap in the conversation to lecture us on the superiority of Christianity. But none of these events beats that of a dear friend who was asked by a visiting VIP how long it took to excavate the Bosphorus.

Apart from those blips, we have met some wonderful people, including a man in his late seventies who was driving a fifty-year-old Citroen 2CV from Turkey to China. And Selim was invited to meet a group of students from Grove City College, Pennsylvania. These young people were participating in a course on Judaism, Islam and Christianity in the Ottoman Empire. Selim came

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home most impressed by their knowledge and good manners. The programme was a pilot scheme, so hopefully there will be more such groups.

Camera action

As I write this we have a television crew in the garden. They are filming a twelve-part mini-series. Yesterday they filmed a monster emerging from the lake. It is a love story, we are told, but whether the lover is one of the handsome young men lounging in the kitchen or the monster, I don't know. The heroine is a heavily made-up village girl, with wisps of bottle-blonde hair escaping from her headscarf and a very non-village cleavage. The number of people it takes to get her to walk down the stairs is unbelievable. There is one woman who keeps leaping forward and tweaking the tendrils of hair, and yet another who keeps dabbing the actress's face. Two men seem to be in charge of a sheet which they keep stringing up to create shade. After I had watched her negotiating the stairs for the umpteenth time, I escaped to my cool, quiet study.

The women from the sewing room are great soap-opera buffs and little or no work will be produced today, apart from the never-ending glasses of tea they are providing the crew. Ismail, who is helping me with the garden these days, is not the slightest bit impressed and is ensuring nobody strays off the paths and steps on the plants. Peeping out of the window, I see a team of men erecting lights in the pergola. Why shade is needed on the outside stairs and lights are needed in the sunless sitting area is beyond me.

Tomorrow they will film in the salon – a village girl reclining on a sofa under the portraits of Selim's ancestors is a little difficult to fathom, but I suppose like most Western soaps, nothing has to make sense. Who said life in the country was quiet? ◆

Beyond the Orchard, a book of Azize Ethem's stories, published by Çitlembik/Nettleberry, is offered to CORNUCOPIA subscribers at £6.50 inc p&p

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Into the lion's den

RAKI, THE NOBLE ANIS SPIRIT KNOWN AS LION'S MILK, IS IN VOGUE AGAIN. KEVIN GOULD AND HIS CORNUCOPIA TEAM SIP THEIR WAY CONTENTEDLY THROUGH A CLUSTER OF NEW BRANDS.

PORTRAIT BY FRITZ VON DER SCHULENBURG

To honour! *Şerefe!* The toast is drunk. As am I. Not the usual rolling, slurred, secret-spilling, arm-round-your-new-best-friend drunk. No, dear friends: I've been rakıed. Turkey's anis-based national spirit, when taken gently, in company and with food, procures a clear, high, happy sensation in the imbiber, one of spirited elation rather than all-out inebriation. The rakıed one, however, is not immune to the drunken indiscretion; lulled by the mixture of feel-good factor and 40+ proof alcohol, tongues are loosened, and rakı works better than sodium pentathol. Hence the toast *"Şerefe!"* – "To honour!" For, on your honour, the delicious indiscretions that spill from the shared bottle of rakı must remain confidential. An exception to this rule is the Great CORNUCOPIA Rakı Tasting – more of which later.

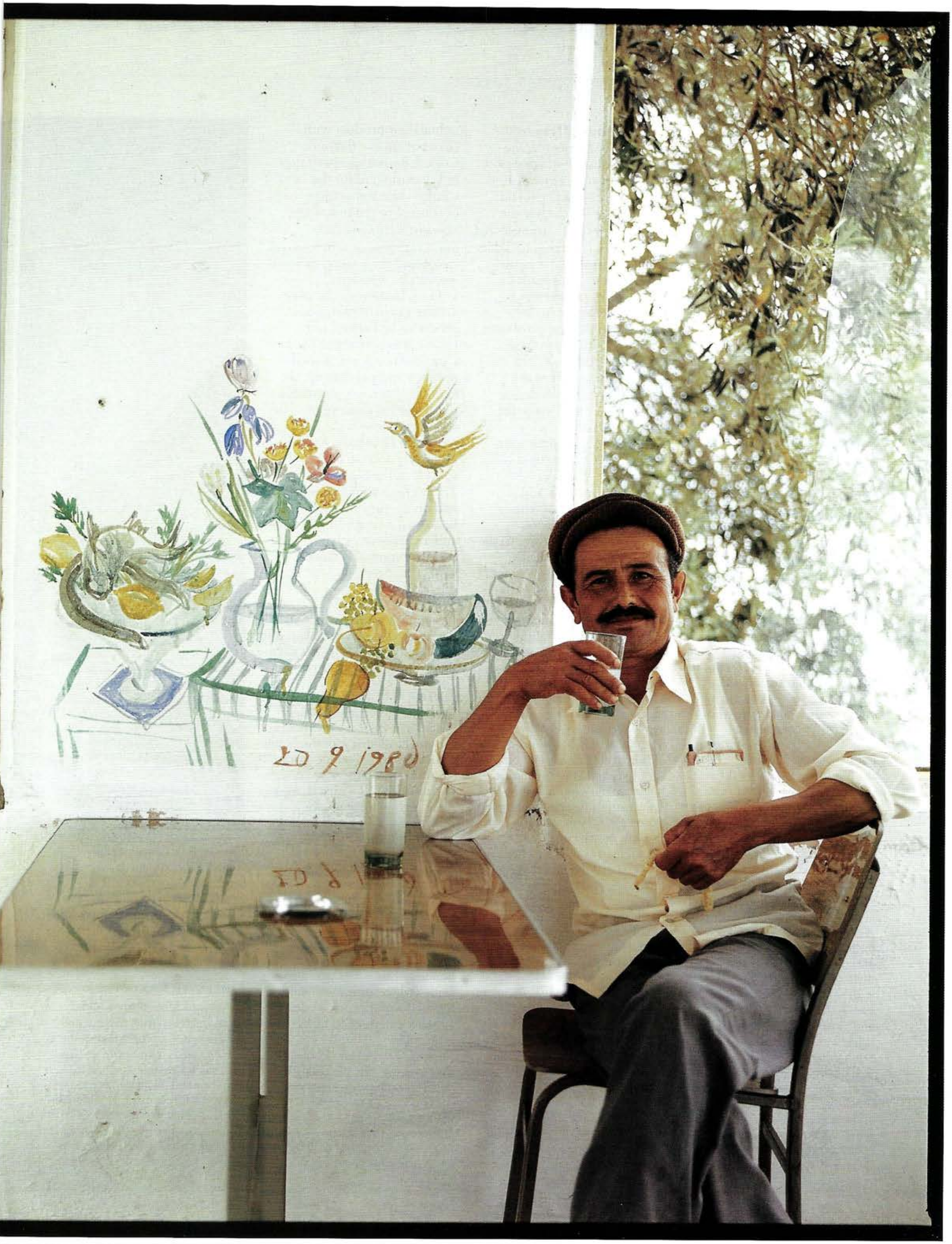
Rakı is a double-distilled spirit whose quality is protected by Turkish law. A minimum of 65 per cent of its alcohol must come from the grape, as distinct from other white spirits, whose alcohol is derived from (much cheaper) grain or potato bases. And unlike its cousins pastis, anisette and ouzo, which are alcoholic beverages to which anis essence is added, to qualify for its name rakı must undergo a second distillation, in copper alembics, in the presence of meaningful quantities of aniseed. This not only adds complexity and depth of flavour, but affects the effect of the spirit, imbuing it with both digestibility and refinement. The traditional distilling method requires large quantities of grapes, of which Turkey is king. The country produces around 3 billion kilos of grapes a year, around 3 per cent of which are made into wine. Some of the rest are eaten or exported as table grapes, but the majority are dried as raisins (it takes 4.5kg of grapes to produce 1kg of raisins, by the way), making Turkey the world's largest exporter of dried vine fruits. The country also happens to be the world's number two in aniseed production, with most rakıs elaborated with aniseed grown either around Çeşme or in the Burdur–Antalya–Denizli triangle.

So, you take good juicy sundried raisins – usually from the Sultaniye grape. You wash them in soft water, then extrude or mince them, and mix water into this sloppy, sweet slurry. This you ferment by seeding it with yeasts, boosted sometimes with refined sugar. Add this brew to rectified grape alcohol and distil together once. Add aniseed and distil again, at around 80°C. Cool.

When diluted with water, rakı turns white and opaque, hence its soubriquet *"aslan sütü"* – "lion's milk". Some rakıs are sweet and long, some bright and rich, some a little raw. Most rakı is taken with meze and fish – though, as we'll see below, a new generation is being produced to be sipped neat, or blended into cocktails.

Rakı's history is perhaps not as long as may be imagined. In the seventeenth century Evliya Çelebi discusses Istanbul's rakı workshops as being dens of iniquity where linden, cinnamon, cloves, pomegranates, mustard, even bananas were distilled into eaux de vies, but the earliest mention of an aniseed rakı doesn't come to us until 1847. From 1928 the state's Tekel arm controlled its manufacture and established distilleries at Tarsus, Alaşehir, Nevşehir, Tekirdağ and Lüleburgaz. Yeni Rakı, then and now the most recognised brand, was produced at all of these places, and many an expert would tell you, with all the mystical divination of a coffee-grounds clairvoyant, how tiny marks or colour gradations on a label denoted which location had made your libation, and how Tekirdağ (or Tarsus, or Trakya, or wherever) was best. Privatisation of Turkey's alcohol production took place in 2004 and in this new competitive era there has been both rationalisation – with the closure of some factories – and the introduction of new styles and brands. Some international investment has also resulted, most notably from the Texas Pacific Group, which now owns, among others, the Yeni Rakı brand. (Texas Pacific is the private equity concern whose other acquisitions range from Burger King to Del Monte fruits. Yeni Rakı is now

LION'S MILK: AN AEGEAN GENT SIPS HIS MILKY, ANISEEDY RAKI IN THE DAYS WHEN RAKI WAS SIMPLY RAKI AND THE LABEL NEVER VARIED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described in some *bakkal* stores as "*Amerikalı*" – the American). Whatever, these changes in the rakı market provide some good news for the connoisseur, as companies and brands strive to stem a decline in rakı-drinking through the introduction of wider ranges, better quality and more niche rakıs. While for many years annual consumption of the spirit remained level at 60 million litres, lately, with the nation gaining a taste for wine and with beer-drinking on the rise, rakı sales have declined to somewhere below 45 million litres a year.

Enter the marketeers, through whose offices two major innovations have arrived. The first is experimentation with fresh grapes as the base ingredient; the second, the maturation of the finished spirit. For fresh grapes to be fermented, the distillery must be situated close to the vineyards; otherwise, as any winemaker will tell you, grapes picked in the hot sun and then inexpertly transported are liable to crushing, bruising and uncontrolled in-transit fermentation. This leads to musty, off-flavours which remain detectable in the finished drink. The extra care therefore required in fresh grape rakı adds cost, but also cachet. Our tasting notes below may help you decide whether they also make the drink delectable.

Maturing a finished spirit has long been done by distillers worldwide. Whisky makers buy sherry casks to add character and sweet woody notes to their products. Bourbon makers set fire to the insides of their barrels to imbue their product with charcoal-smoky flavours. Cognac houses use *barriques* of Limousin oak for the vanilla-spice scents these produce. For the first time, rakı distilleries are now maturing their products in oak casks, and the results, as you'll see, can be wonderful.

Thus, faced with the most diverse range of rakıs yet produced in Turkey, our tasting was performed by the Cornucopia team. Toned, pumped and psyched up, the team has been in training for this event for some years. The chosen venue was the rooftop terrace of Istanbul's Armada Hotel: around us, dark and sparkling, the Sea of Marmara. The evening stretched ahead and on the table in front of us beckoned a lake of milky rakıs and an array of rather excellent meze. To work!

SARI
ZEYBE
Rakı
%45

THE GREAT CORNUCOPIA RAKI TASTING

While many wine-makers have become media celebrities (and even Fenerbahçe football team has a rakı named after them), the rakı master has remained determinedly anonymous. As with the sherry-makers, who spend entire careers in a bodega's shadows maintaining consistency and making wines to the house style, so are rakı masters dissuaded from broadcasting their opinions or meeting the press. Instead, these silent craftsmen pour their personalities into rakı.

FRESH-GRAPE RAKI

Also known as yeşil (green), and always with a green label, this is a good place for the novice to start. Fashionable bars use these rakıs in cocktails. Fashionable types sip them over ice. Equally good taken with water.

Efe Green: Restrained, subdued and narrow of flavour – a rakı to drink with strangers, we thought. Fresh grapes bring a delicate note but, oh, this also tastes of grape stems. Woody and slightly brackish, the end result is acceptable, but tastes unfinished. If ever a rakı required rounding off by ageing in wood, this was it.

Burgaz Yaş Üzüm: Fresh grapes. Rounder, fresher, smoother than the Efe Green, as might be expected of a Trakya rakı. The Burgaz people tell us that their water comes from the Istranca Mountains, donating an extra softness to their rakıs. Seems like a good reason to sip some more.

Mest Misket: Misket is the name of both a folk dance and an old variety of red grape grown in Bulgaria and around Izmir. This rakı, with its decidedly feminine character, is bang up to date in its slim, pretty bottle. Sugar has been added at the end of the process, making it perhaps a little over sweet. But an excellent after-dinner digestif.

Fasıl: Wow! Voluptuous and vanilla-scented, Fasıl tastes sweetly feminine all by itself. Perfect for rakı on the rocks.

THE MEN'S STUFF

Forthright, bold, uncompromising brands, these are almost always taken with water.

Ata: Severe. The taste of rough alcohol dominates – a sure sign of shortcuts taken in the distilling. Drink early and kiss goodbye to the rest of your evening.

Yeni Rakı: You could say it's cohesive. But you could also call it one-dimensional.

Fasıl Blue has the distinction of delivering a hangover while you're still drinking it. More hair than dog – grubby *meyhane* rakı.

EXTRA-REFINED RAKI

Designed for tenderer palates, brands like Tekirdağ and Burgaz are usually diluted with water, but sometimes served on the rocks.

Mercan: Agreeable with food, but a little bitter by itself. As there is cooking wine, so Mercan would be cooking rakı.

Burgaz: Not too aniseedy, not too smooth, not too harsh – textbook rakı, we thought.

Tekirdağ: Nicely scented – herby and sweetish. A good, standard pouring rakı that will work well in cocktails.

Izmir Rakısı: Assertive, very noticeably sweet, with a liquorice finish. In the old days, some stylish Izmir rakıs were finished with figs. However, this approximate version lacks refinement.

Organik Efe: A star is born. Is it that organic anis is richer, deeper or more fragrant, or organic raisins juicier than their conventionally grown cousins? Is there another bottle of this for us to sip long into the night? An *efe* is one who performs the Zeybek folk dance of the Aegean: this Efe has a large, confident nose followed by excellent perky, complex flavours that pirouette their way across the palate. An honourable addition to the pantheon of great rakıs.

DIGESTIF RAKI

Luxurious after-dinner rakıs, often barrel-matured, designed for contemplative, soft sipping.

Efe 3 Distile: This is Efe's foray into the black-label, super-luxe, triple-distilled spirit market pioneered by Smirnoff. Whereas neutral-spirit grain vodka is made more neutral ("smoother") by triple distillation, in rakı this seems like an exercise lacking

ATA
RAKI
BURGAZ
YENİ
RAKI
fasıl
YAŞ ÜZÜM RAKISI
EFE
ORGANİK RAKI

point. So smooth has this rakı become, in fact, that with water, its anis flavour is evanescent to the point of vanishing. Efe 3 does, however, make a posh sipping spirit, to be drunk straight out of the freezer.

Tekirdağ Altın: Matured in oak barrels for two months. Edgy, sharp and intensely accurate – which is more than can be said for the quality of my notes.

Sarı Zeybek: We saved the best until last. The most expensive rakı tasted, and the most uplifting. Sarı Zeybeks were fabled Aegean warriors, and the name was affectionately bestowed on Atatürk. After a couple of months in oak, this beautifully made rakı exhibits subtle, smoky accents, is golden-hued, proud and fat, velvet and silk. An honourable addition to the roll of the world's great spirits.

THE MEZE

Rakı is indissoluble from its partner, meze. Everywhere you drink it, from the ritziest bar to the grubbiest *meyhane*, rakı will be served with meze. At the very least, white cheese and slices of melon are offered, while hardened rakı drinkers will also expect *leblebi* (dry-roasted white chickpeas) and salted almonds.

As Spanish tapas have evolved from a simple slice of bread to be taken with sherry into a culinary canon of their own, so with meze. In most places where rakı is taken, trays of meze are brought to your table. First the cold: white cheese, of course, and yoghurt dishes, *cacık* (yoghurt with garlic, cucumber and dill), humus, a garlicky paste of pounded chickpeas and sesame oil; ground walnuts with red pepper and parsley; courgette or aubergine fritters; paper-thin slices of *pastırma* (dried beef).

Fish and seafood, in those places that specialise, will include salads of shrimp or marinated octopus and, if you're lucky, *lakerda*, slices of brine-cured tunny served with red onions.

Next, *zeytinyağlı* dishes, the class of meze that are stewed in olive oil and served cold, may include *pilâki* (beans cooked with tomato, garlic and onions); artichoke hearts with broad beans, dill and lemon sauce; various dolma – vine leaves or cabbage leaves stuffed with rice, pine-kernels and raisins.

Finally hot meze will follow: triangular or cigar-shaped cheese *böreks*, fried minced meat *köfte*, deliciously grilled, chewy sausages. There are more meze than there are days of the year. Which is at least 365 reasons to drink rakı. ◆

Kevin Gould writes on food and travel in the Saturday *Guardian*, and is the author of *Loving and Cooking with Reckless Abandon* (Quadrille, £16.99) and *Dishy* (Hodder & Stoughton, £25)

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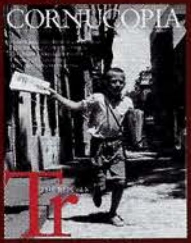

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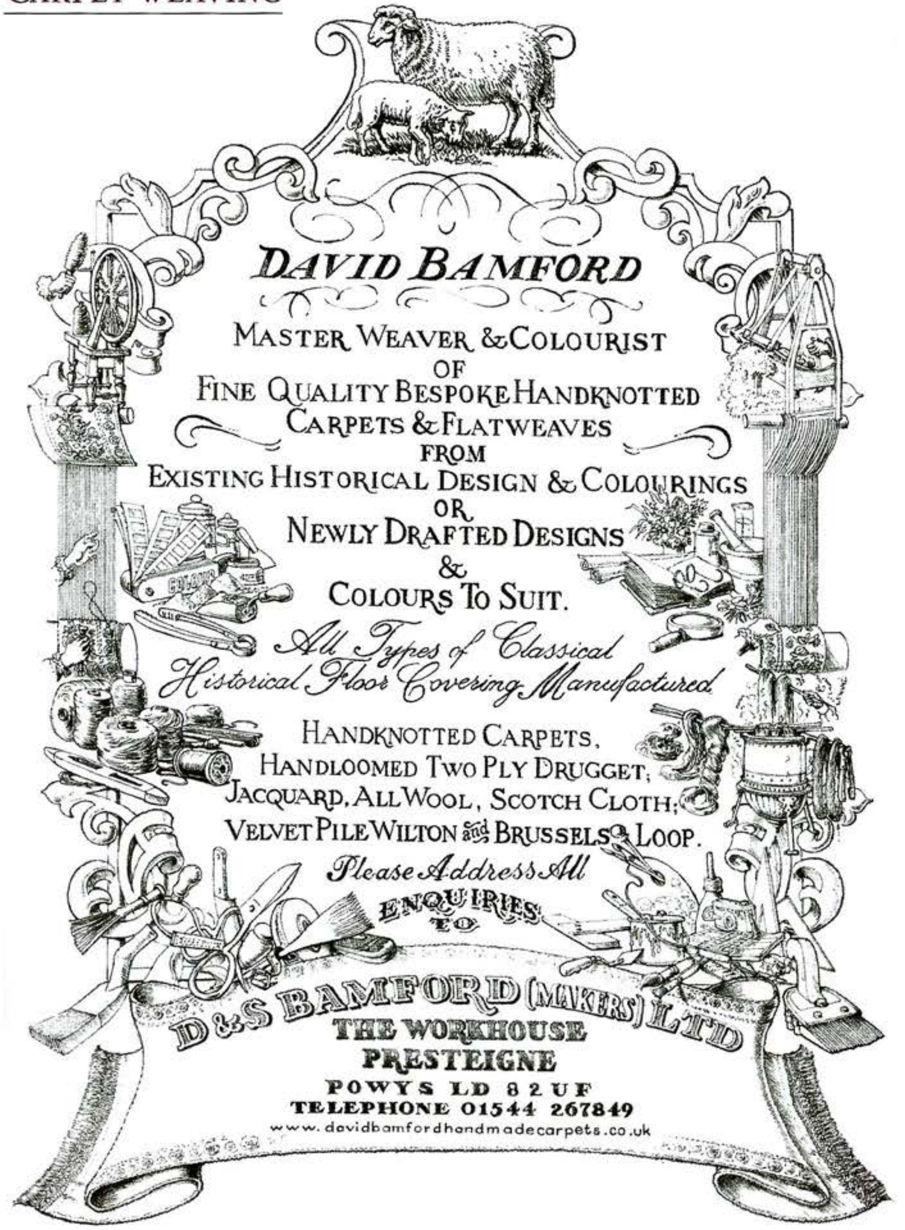

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Tales from the top tables

ANDREW FINKEL CHECKS OUT THE BALL-GOWNS AT ISTANBUL'S BRAND-NEW HARVEY NICHOLS WHILE DINING IN STYLE IN THEIR TOP-FLOOR BRASSERIE, THEN MEETS HIS MATCH AT DÜKKÂN, WHERE THEY TAKE THEIR BEEF SERIOUSLY

Talking shop at Harvey Nicks

If you've ever wondered why Turkish shop assistants tail you round the clothes racks like a store detective about to make a bust, Brian Handley knows the reason why. You might be a shopaholic, drooling over clothes you can't possibly afford, or the type who prefers the dentist's chair to trying on clothes. Either way, Brian Handley understands you better than you do yourself. And whether you are thinking of spending the gross national product of Ecuador on your next party frock or merely after a jar of orange marmalade, Brian Handley knows someone to hold your hand.

Mr Handley runs Harvey Nichols, the flagship store in Istanbul's ultra-posh Kanyon Shopping Centre, and is general manager of the Unitim group of stores. Istanbul is slowly learning that in Britain Harvey Nichols's status is only slightly lower than that of the Queen. Tell London sophisticates Istanbul is a style capital on a par with Barcelona or Milan and they will smile politely. But say you bought your Manolo Blahniks from Harvey Nicks in Istanbul and they'll be scouring the internet to book a flight.

"I feel I am selling Istanbul to the brands," Brian Handley tells me. It takes me a moment to realise that "brands" is not some Damon Runyonesque moniker for ladies who lunch, but the senior executives and designers from fashion houses such as Lanvin, Viktor & Rolf and Marc Jacobs. "I'd say 60 percent had never been to Turkey before, and 85 percent come right back again for a holiday," he says. From ultra-slick Michael Kors to hippy-chic Matthew Williamson, the Brands' are there on Harvey Nichols's floors.

The waiter has uncorked a bottle of Sarafin's oaky Cabernet Sauvignon to go with my first course of steak tartare. We are dining in Gilt, the store's top-floor brasserie. It is decorated in black and gold, with dangly bits of chain, and the most imaginatively decorated toilet booths outside an episode of Doctor Who. Brian Handley explains that since he can't offer his patrons a Bosphorus view, he's given them theatre instead. He was there from day one, overseeing the design of the whole store, from the diamanté-decked personal-shopping area to the ball-gown racks, with their Oscar de la Renta, Carlos Miele and Vera Wang creations suspended from the ceiling on enormous hangers, like the ladies' cloakroom at a Star Wars-themed senior prom.

When the lobster tagliatelle arrives for the main course it, too, has a dramatic, extra-terrestrial air. The strands emerge Medusa-like from the lobster shell, copper-coloured, almost wiggling, but creamy and with an intense flavour.

I'm wearing my third-trendiest tie (Liberty's duty-free store, Heathrow, c1996) for the occasion, but who am I trying to kid? I steer the conversation away from fashion to that question of why Turkish shop assistants stick to you like fly-paper. "They are not trained to read your body language," he tells me. And as they work on commission they are trying to force a sale. But not in Harvey Nicks. Brian Handley explains he would have preferred to train his own staff from *tabulae rasae*, people with no retail experience at all. But that wasn't practical. So he led them off on one of those executive-style retreats in a hotel somewhere far away to train them in understanding what the customer wants. The Greta Garbo types (like me) they will leave alone, but if a customer asks a question, that's seen as an invitation to show them more.

Brian Handley is proud of his store and wants everyone, socialite and shopgirl, to go inside. But what's the point if they can't afford clothing which Brian Handley himself describes as being priced not as a garment but as a piece of moving art? Of course art galleries aren't there just for collectors, but to create an appreciative audience. And if the store is theatre, it's sterile to perform just to the royal box. And what's the fun of having an expensive seat if the upper balcony isn't jam packed as well. "Exclusive but accessible" is his watchword. "A Chanel lipstick costs the same in Harvey Nichols as anywhere else, so why not buy it here?" Then once they buy the lipstick, maybe they'll come back for the end-of-season sale. The store boasts racks of diffusion brands – the less expensive output of the big names – so someone without a big budget might still come here to buy that one amazing dress.

Today is Wednesday and the restaurant and the store are far from full. But Brian Handley is not concerned. It will take four or five seasons before he understands Istanbul and the city understands his inclusive philosophy. The store is a $40 million investment, so clearly he and Unitim are in it for the long haul. And of course, the store doesn't rely on a high-volume turnover. Lounging at a nearby table is a trio of trim thirty-somethings, a woman puffing on a cigar only slightly thinner than her arm, squeezed between two black-jacketed male companions. Handley confides that she has just spent a sum which I hastily calculate is equal to the price tag on a decent second-hand car. I feel like Dr Watson: how does he know how much she spent? It's the fancy cardboard bag – you only get one if you splash out.

We say goodnight. On the way I am tempted to buy the English marmalade from the food hall, but I am much too sated. Perhaps I'll come back for it during the sale while I'm looking for a new tie.

Gilt: Harvey Nichols, Kanyon, Levent, Istanbul (closed Tuesdays); +90-212 319 9000; harveynichols.com.tr

Something to beef about

I sat down to dinner one night with Beyti Güler – the only living Turk to have a kebab named after him – hoping to wheedle out of him the secret of his success. Mr Güler is the Horatio Alger of grilled meat, a man who turned a roadside stand into a vast emporium that attracts mums and dads and heads of state. The waiter had just brought us a rib of beef slightly smaller than the Louisiana

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Purchase. But what did Beyti Güler do differently from all the others? I wondered. He sliced his way enthusiastically through the chop – goodness knows how many times he must have done this before – and smacked his lips a little ostentatiously as he chewed, like an oenophile who has just uncorked a 1961 *premier cru*. But he looked genuinely concerned as he struggled for the right words to describe the experience. "The meat," was the only thing he could say.

I've seen that same look only once subsequently. Emre Mermer, who purveys well-hung, perfectly marbled meat to discerning restaurants, has opened his own butcher's in Istanbul, and now a restaurant. Not a man to stoop to capture fashion, he is driven by obsession. **Emre Mermer'in Dükkan** (Emre Mermer's Shop) is not for amateur eaters and there is no point going unless you like meat. There is a more than obvious hint of this seriousness in the decor – a bare room with wooden tables – the only truly decorative element being a refrigerated display cabinet lined with giant hunks of artfully illuminated beef. The mahogany patina of resting beef is, in fact, visually arresting, really quite beautiful. And better than Damien Hirst, because you get to eat as well as look.

Woe betide anyone who asks for his meat well-cooked. You are likely to be ushered to the *döner kebapçı* down the road. The choice is rare or rare, the dry-aged beef thickly sliced and seared over a roaring-hot fire. The grill is half-Argentinian (the coals piled thick, nearly flaming) and half-Gaziantep (the grill pan flat, not at an incline, to burn the fat, giving the meat a smoky taste). We tried the ribeye, which was buttery, and a firm, succulent T-bone.

There are few distractions from the meat, apart from a salad bowl from which you help yourself. Not even bread. The butcher next door makes pretty decent beef sausages and a smoked-veal bacon – a lean cousin of pastrami. This finds its way into the best hamburger I have ever munched – pretty close to steak tartare in a bun.

Mr Mermer's business partner, Defne Koryürek, explains the restaurant is a work in progress. They are debating whether to serve dessert (they were experimenting with grilled pineapple with red pepper the night I went) and acknowledge the acoustic needs attention.

So far, they don't appear to have put a foot wrong. Emre Mermer's Shop is in the unglamorous neighbourhood of Armutlu, across the highway from upscale Etiler, but it is already hard to get a table. Like the old restaurants around Les Halles, which attracted a stream of Parisian toffs, it is already a gastronomic landmark. I didn't tot up the capital represented by the bank presidents and financiers at nearby tables on the night I attended, but it was several billion dollars, at least. Even so, the bill was moderate.

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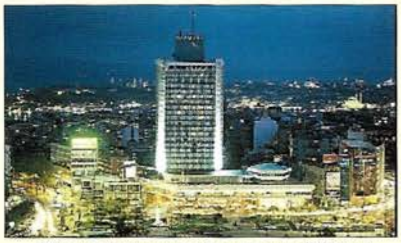

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Looking for the genuine Istanbul? Head for the Armada, in the historic Old City. Stroll to the unmissable Topkapı Palace and Ayasofya. Enjoy a drink or dinner in the magical rooftop restaurant overlooking the Blue Mosque and the Sea of Marmara. Get in tune with the rhythms of live gypsy music or traditional fasıl.
www.armadahotel.com.tr
Tel 90-212 455 4455. Fax 90-212 455 4499

HILTON IZMIR

Aegean landmark: city-centre, panoramic views, 380 rooms (9 suites, 64 deluxe/63 exec. rooms), 3 restaurants/2 bars, 18 meeting rooms/ business-centre/banqueting facilities, helipad/ covered parking, shopping mall, health club (squash/tennis/fitness centre/indoor pool/steam bath/sauna/solarium). Wireless internet in all rooms, restaurants, meeting rooms. sales.izmir@hilton.com www.hilton.com
Tel 90-232 497 6060
Fax 90-232 497 6000

HILTON ISTANBUL

The Hilton stands in 13 acres of landscaped gardens, yet is within walking distance of the main business, shopping and entertainment districts of Maçka, Nişantaşı and Taksim. Unrivalled view, restaurants and bars, newly renovated bedrooms; outstanding meeting rooms, including the Hilton Convention & Exhibition Centre. Check availability and book online:
www.istanbul.hilton.com
Tel 90-212 315 6000
Fax 90-212 240 4165

Taş Hotel – Alaçati Çeşme

A wonderful hotel in a wonderful little town that has became the showcase of rediscovered country chic. Taş Hotel is a 110-year-old stone house, whose natural, simple, unaffected style pioneered the vogue for Alaçatı. 8 rooms, refreshing swimmingpool in a perfectly peaceful lawn, superb breakfast of olives, village bread and home-made jam. www.tasotel.com; info@tasotel.com.

Tel 90-232 716 7772; fax 90-232 716 8517

Sumahan on the Water – Istanbul

Located in an historic setting on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus, a small special hotel with private waterfront – intimate, modern and very comfortable. All 6 rooms & 12 suites have spectacular views of the old city. Private Bosphorus launch service; award-winning Kordon Restaurant on the premises; airport 35km. Member of Conde Nast Johansens. www.sumahan.com; info@sumahan.com

Tel 90 216 422 8000. Fax 90 216 422 8008

Mehmet Ali Ağa Mansion – Datça

Member of Relais et Chateax, this is a unique museum hotel set in the almond, olive and lemon groves on the Datça peninsula. The Ottoman konak was built in 1809, its frescoes lovingly restored. Swimming pool, private beach, 18 rooms in a choice of modern or traditional style. The hotel's Elaki Restautant is famed for its wine cellar and regional cuisine. www.kocaev.com; info@kocaev.com

Tel 90-252 712 9257; fax 90-252 712 9256

Empress Zoe – Sultanahmet, Istanbul

A delightfully peaceful small hotel just a minute's walk from Ayasofya, Topkapı Palace and the Arasta Bazaar with a secret garden of cypress and palm trees next to the romantic ivy-clad ruins of a 16th-century domed hamam covered with wild delphiniums and snapdragons. Each room is airy and full of charm; many have little hamams of their own. www.emzoe.com

Tel 90-212 518 2504; fax 90-212 518 5699

Sheraton Hotel & Convention Centre Ankara

Luxury meets convenience in a landmark hotel. Tastefully decorated, ideal for business and leisure, all you'd expect of a luxury hotel plus worldclass technology. Smart lobby bar – Ankara residents' rendezvous of choice, brasserie with all-day dining & fine views; Italian cuisine at L'Angoletto. Grand new wing for weddings & conventions. www.sheraton.com/ankara

Tel 90-312 457 6000. Fax 90 312 457 6100

Museum Hotel – Uçhisar, Cappadocia

'Wonderful, artistic, one of a kind,' writes an ecstatic visitor to this painstakingly restored Uçhisar house hotel with dramatic views over Cappadocia's tufa landscape. Each of the 10 suites and 25 arched and rock-carved rooms is lavishly furnished, with every comfort and mod con: unforgettable.

info@museum-hotel.com www.museum-hotel.com

Tel 90-384 219 2220. Fax 90-384 219 2444

Lavanta Hotel – Yalikavak, Bodrum

Panoramic sea view, spectacular sunsets. This small, exclusive *hôtel de charme* is operated by the owners. Rooms and suites are individually decorated with antiques and valuable furnishings and have panoramic views. Set in a tranquil hillside surrounded by olive groves and fields of fragrant herbs. April 15–Oct 16.

www.lavanta.com; lavantahotel@compuserve.de

Tel 90-252 385 2167. Fax 90-252 385 2290

The Marmara Bodrum

Member of the *Small Luxury Hotels of the World*. The Marmara Bodrum has breathtaking views of Bodrum Bay. All 100 rooms have balcony or terrace. Facilities include the Tuti Restaurant, 2 pools, fitness centre, spa, 2 squash courts, 24-hr room service, 2 meeting rooms, business centre, dry cleaning, hairdresser. www.themarmarahotels.com bodrum-info@themarmarahotels.com

Tel 90-252 313 81 30. Fax 90-252 313 8131

Queen Ada Hotel – Torba, Bodrum

Nothing comes between you and the ideal Mediterranean holiday in this hotel set in beautiful gardens with its own beach and private jetty in pretty Torba Bay. 22 luxurious rooms and a spacious suite, all air-conditioned, offer a charm impossible to find in large 5-star hotels. Bodrum: 10 mins. Bodrum Airport: 30 mins.

www.queenadahotel.com.tr info@queenadahotel.com.tr

Tel 90-252 367 1598pbx. Fax 90-252 367 1614

Atami Hotel – Bodrum

Tranquility itself, a small charming seaside hotel in Bodrum's undisturbed Paradise Bay – private beach and beautiful gardens in spectacular natural surroundings. 32 comfortable rooms, all with sea views. This family-run hotel offers friendly service, delicious Mediterranean and Japanese cuisine, and holistic holidays. Open all year. www.atamihotel.com; info@atamihotel.com

Tel: 90-252 357 7417. Fax 90-252 357 7421

The Marmara Pera – Istanbul

This smart new business and leisure hotel in historic Pera adds a dash of 70s modernism to Istanbul's trendiest quarter. 200 rooms, 3 suites, modern meeting rooms, high-tech business & fitness centres. The Cafe Marmara is *the* place to tête à tête over delicious food, homemade chocolates and cakes. www.themarmarahotels.com; pera-info@themarmarahotels.com

Tel 90-212 251 4646. Fax 90-212 249 8033

Rocks Hotel & Casino, North Cyprus

Located in the heart of the coastal city of Girne, 60 km from Ercan airport and 2 mins walk from the old harbour. 155 rooms and suites with mountain or sea view. Facilities for the disabled, conference and banquet rooms, health and beauty centre, fully equipped for business or leisure guests.

info@rockshotel.com www.rockshotel.com

Tel 90-392 815 22 38. Fax 90-392 815 5712

Hotel Dedeman Konya & Convention Centre

The Konya region's largest, most advanced convention centre. Centrally located within walking distance of the business district and shopping centres, the hotel is just 14km from the airport. 207 exquisite rooms include 37 executive rooms, 4 suites and 2 presidential suites. Panoramic views, chic restaurants, bars, health centre & spa. For demanding business and leisure travellers alike.

konya@dedeman.com
www.dedeman.com
Tel 90-332 221 6600. Fax 90-332 221 6646

Hotel Dedeman Rize

An easy drive from Trabzon Airport, this is an excellent base from which to explore Turkey's spectacular eastern Black Sea coast, famous for its mountains, tea gardens, mansions and wild flowers as well as its hospitality. The hotel has 82 sea-view rooms, all mod-cons, rooftop restaurant, health club, sauna, private beach and indoor swimmingpool. Car hire available.

rize@dedeman.com
www.dedeman.com
Tel 90-464 223 4444. Fax 90-464 223 5348

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